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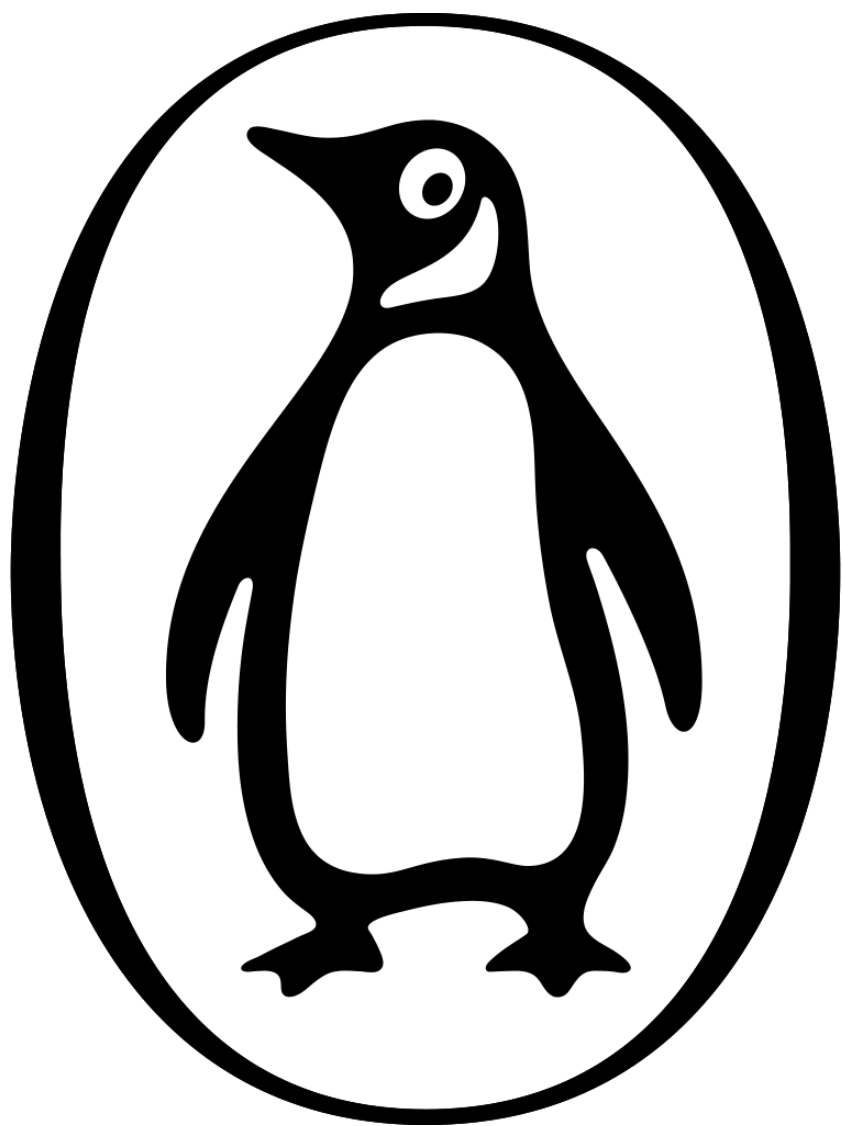
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THE EROTIC POEMS



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THE EROTIC POEMS

ADVISORY EDITOR: BETTY RADICE

PUBLIUS OVIDIUS NASO was born in 43 BC at Sulmo (Sulmona) in central Italy. He was sent to Rome to attend the schools of famous rhetoricians but, realizing that his talent lay with poetry rather than politics, he began instead to cultivate the acquaintance of literary Romans and to enjoy the smart witty Roman society of which he soon became a leading member. His first published work was *Amores*, a collection of short love poems; then followed *Heroides*, verse-letters supposedly written by deserted ladies to their former lovers, *Ars Amatoria*, a handbook on love, *Remedia Amoris*, and *Metamorphoses*. Ovid was working on *Fasti*, a poem on the Roman calendar, when in AD 8 the emperor Augustus expelled him for some unknown offence to Tomis on the Black Sea. He continued to write, notably *Tristia* and *Epistulae ex Ponto*, and always spoke longingly of Rome. He died, still in exile, in AD 17 or 18.

PETER GREEN, MA, Ph.D. (Cantab), FRSL, was born in London in 1924, and educated at Charterhouse and Trinity College, Cambridge, where he took first-class honours in both parts of the Classical Tripos (1950), winning the Craven Scholarship and Studentship the same year. After a short spell as a Director of Studies in classics at Cambridge he worked for some years as a freelance writer, translator and literary journalist, and as a publisher. In 1963 he emigrated to Greece with his family. From 1966 until 1971 he lectured in Greek history and literature at Athens; from 1971 until 1997 he taught in the University of Texas at Austin, from 1983 as the Dougherty Centennial Professor of Classics (now Emeritus). He is currently an Adjunct Professor in the University of Iowa (where his wife is Associate Professor of Classics), and Editor of *Syllecta Classica*. His publications include *Essays in Antiquity* (1960), *Alexander the Great* (1970), *Armada from Athens: The Failure of the Sicilian Expedition, 415–143 BC* (1971), *The Year of Salamis, 480–479 BC* (1971), *The Shadow of the Parthenon* (1972), *A Concise History of Ancient Greece* (1973), three historical novels, *Achilles his Armour* (1955), *The Sword of Pleasure* (1957) and *The*

Laughter of Aphrodite (1965), a historical biography, *Alexander of Macedon 356–323 BC* (1974), *Classical Bearings: Interpreting Ancient History and Culture* (1989), *Alexander to Actium: The Historical Evolution of the Hellenistic Age* (1990) and, most recently the *Argonautika* of Apollonios Rhodios (1997). He has also translated Ovid's *The Poems of Exile* and Juvenal's *The Sixteen Satires* for the Penguin Classics.

OVID

THE EROTIC POEMS

THE AMORES

THE ART OF LOVE

CURES FOR LOVE

ON FACIAL TREATMENT FOR LADIES

TRANSLATED WITH AN INTRODUCTION AND NOTES BY PETER GREEN

PENGUIN BOOKS

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

- Aesch. Aeschylus (525 or 524–456 BC), Greek tragedian. *Prom.*:
Prometheus
- Apollod. Apollodorus, Greek mythographer (?1st or 2nd cent. AD)
- Appian Appianus of Alexandria: Roman-naturalized Greek historian
 and *procurator Augusti* (2nd cent. AD)
Bell. Civ.: *Bella Civilia* (= bks 13–17 of his *Romaika*)
- Apul. Apuleius of Madaurus (2nd cent. AD), African-Roman writer
 and rhetorician
De Mag.: *Pro se de Magia* (or *Apologia*)
De Orthogr.: *De Orthographia*
- Aratus Aratus of Soli (c. 315–240 or 239 BC), Greek Hellenistic poet
Phaen.: *Phaenomena*
- Cic. Marcus Tullius Cicero (106–43 BC), Roman writer and
 statesman
De Div.: *De Divinatione ad M. Brutum*
- Dio Cass. Cassius Dio Cocceianus of Nicaea (2nd–3rd cent. AD), Roman
 statesman and historian
- Diod. Sic. Diodorus Siculus of Agyrium (*fl.* 1st cent. BC), Greek historian
- Hes. Hesiod (*fl.* 8th–7th cent. BC), early Greek didactic poet
Theog.: *The Theogony*
- Hom. Homer (?*fl.* 8th cent. BC), Greek epic poet
Il.: *The Iliad*
Od.: *The Odyssey*
- Hor. Horace (Quintus Horatius Flaccus) 65–8 BC, Roman poet
- Juv. Decimus Iunius Iuvenalis (AD ?55–?140), Roman satirist
- Ovid Publius Ovidius Naso (43 BC–AD 17 or 18), Roman elegiac and
 didactic poet (see [Introd.](#), *passim*)
- AA, Ars: *Ars Amatoria*
 Am.: *Amores*
 EP: *Epistulae ex Ponto* (*Black Sea Letters*)
 Fast.: *Fasti*
 Her.: *Heroides*
 Met.: *Metamorphoses*
 MF: *Medicamina Faciei Feminae* (*On Facial Treatment for Ladies*)
 RA: *Remedia Amoris* (*Cures for Love*)
 Tr(ist).: *Tristia* (*Poems of Lamentation*)
- Ovidian. N. I. Herescu (ed.) *Ovidiana: Recherches Sur Ovide*, Paris, 1958
- Pers. Aulus (?Aules) Persius Flaccus (AD 34–62), Roman satirist
- Plin., Ep. Plinius Caecilius Secundus (AD c. 61–c. 112), Roman lawyer,

- administrator and writer: the *Epistulae* in nine books form his public and literary correspondence
- Plin., **HN**. Plinius Secundus (AD 23 or 24–79), uncle of the foregoing: published *inter alia* the *Historia Naturalis* in 37 books
- Prop. Sextus Propertius (between 54 and 47 BC–? before 2 BC), from Assisi in Umbria, Roman elegiac poet
- Quint. M. Fabius Quintilianus (?AD 30–35 to c. 100), Roman scholar and rhetorician
Inst. Orat.: Institutio Oratoria
- Sen. **Contr.** Lucius Annaeus Seneca (the Elder) (c. 55 BC–c. AD 40), Spanish-born Roman historian and rhetorician, author of *Controversiae* and *Suasoriae*
- Sen. L. Annaeus Seneca (the Younger) (c. AD 1–65), son of the above, Roman philosopher and tragedian
De Benef.: De Beneficiis
De Const.: De Constantia Sapientis
- Stob. Joannes Stobaeus (John of Stobi), anthologist (?5th cent. AD)
- Suet. C. Suetonius Tranquillus (AD c. 69–c. 130), Roman imperial administrator and author of *Lives* of the Caesars from Julius Caesar to Domitian
Calig.: Caligula

De Gramm.: De Grammaticis

Div. Aug.: Divus Augustus

Div. Jul.: Divus Julius

Tac. Cornelius Tacitus (AD c. 56–c. 120), Roman historian

Ann.: Annales

Dial.: Dialogus de Oratoribus

Tib. Tibullus (b. c. 50 BC), Roman elegiac poet

Velle P. Velleius Paterculus (c. 19 BC–AD 30–35?), Roman soldier and historian of Campanian descent

Virg. Vergilius Maro (70–19 BC), Roman pastoral and epic poet

Aen.: Aeneid

Ecl.: Eclogues

Georg.: Georgics

PREFACE AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This book has been a long time in the making: so long, indeed, that even the saint-like patience of my editor and mentor, Betty Radice, has at times come dangerously close to breaking-point. Yet in many ways the delay—not that either of us could have foreseen this—proved beneficial. When I was writing about Ovid in the late 1950s his reputation, though on the rise again—Patrick Wilkinson’s enthusiastic reappraisal in *Ovid Recalled* (1954) did a lot to help the process of recovery—still remained peripheral and uncertain. Today, twenty years later, his star is triumphantly reestablished in the poetic firmament. Structuralists, symbolists and rhetoricians have combined with more traditional critics to achieve his literary rehabilitation: one more metamorphosis for that eternally Protean creative spirit. The slow progress of my own task meant that I was able to take account of much seminal work (some of it very recent indeed) that has marked the Ovidian revival. Formal thanks to all the scholars whom this book has laid under contribution would require more space than an already over-lengthy text can well spare, and selection would be invidious. In one area, however, I am glad to break my own rule, and to name names. As a translator I owe a quite incalculable debt to the fundamental work done on the text of Ovid’s erotic poems by Franco Munari, G. P. Goold and, above all, by my old friend E. J. Kenney, now Kennedy Professor of Latin at Cambridge, on whose Oxford text the present version is based.

For the record, I note here those occasions on which my readings differ from those of the Oxford text: *Am.* 1.2.12, 1.3.24, 1.4.7, 1.6.25, 1.7.33, 1.8.50, 1.9.5, 1.10.5, 30, 57, 1.11.18, 1.13.19, 33–4, 39, 1.14.25, 1.15.25, 2.1.5, 2.5.5, 2.6.27–8, 2.7.25, 2.9.1–2, 2.11.9, 2.15.11–12, 24, 2.17.24, 2.18.26, 2.19.7, 20, 52, 3.1.53, 56, 3.2.5, 3.3.14, 17, 3.7.55, 3.9.29, 37, 40, 3.10.39, 3.12.13, 29; *AA* 1.2.114, 118, 133, 234, 255, 439, 515, 553, 730, 747; 2.196, 300, 307, 317, 356, 589, 590, 611, 612, 647, 689–90, 700; 3.155, 169, 170, 231, 241, 269, 270, 282, 288, 295, 299, 364, 440, 454, 455, 476, 486–90, 594, 629, 742; *RA* 65, 123, 135, 161, 221, 268, 284, 351, 364, [? 407], 446, 467, 704, 713, 756; *MF* 27–8, 35, 51, 60, 98. Originally my notes contained full reports on these and other textual problems; but such discussions, together with all specific references to modern scholarship on Ovid, have been, of necessity, excised in order to reduce this book to an economically viable length. It should not be assumed, from either my notes or my Select Reading List (p. 429), that I have not faced the problems, or familiarized myself with the

scholarship. I plan to return to such matters elsewhere. Meanwhile, experts will at once recognize my debts, and other readers should remember their existence. To all those whose labours in this field have supported my own work, my profound thanks, and apologies for an apparent lack of academic courtesy as unwelcome as it is involuntary.

Until Professor Barsby edited Bk 1 of the *Amores*, Mr A. S. Hollis Bk 1 of the *Art of Love*, and Mr A. A. R. Henderson, even more recently, the *Remedia Amoris*, there was no commentary whatsoever on these poems available in English, and no full, up-to-date commentary in any language. It is, therefore, my hope that the present volume, besides offering a translation that takes account of recent important scholarship in the field, will also be of some use to students.

Many friends, colleagues and students, in the University of Texas and elsewhere, have contributed materially to my work, often during various courses, lectures and seminars held over the years, from which I invariably learnt at least as much as I imparted, and which at times led me substantially to modify my views. To Mr Joseph Casazza in particular I owe a debt of gratitude for drawing my attention to the possible presence and influence of Ovid's mysterious first wife in the *Amores*. Professor Kenney corresponded with me about various problems of reading and interpretation, and Sir Ronald Syme on the matter of Ovid's exile. The late Professor Gilbert Highet gave the original (and very different) draft of my introductory remarks on Ovid's *persona* a most searching and beneficial scrutiny. From M. Andrej and Mme Halina Pradzynski I obtained invaluable expert advice regarding Ovid's knowledge of cosmetic preparations. The librarians of the American School of Classical Studies in Athens, and the Classics Library and Main (now the Perry-Castañeda) Library in the University of Texas at Austin have given me every possible assistance throughout. My Penguin Classics editor, Betty Radice, deserves special thanks for her resolute patience and faith against odds: I only hope she thinks the waiting was worth it. She must also take full credit for the skilful abridging of what turned out to be a prohibitively lengthy MS.

Serendipity also played its part. A chance meeting in Ottawa, at a crucial late stage in my research, enabled me to read Dr Caroline Callway Preston's long, subtle and infinitely perceptive poem about Ovid, passages from which etched themselves indelibly on my memory, and in many ways illuminated my quest for the poet's elusive personality (besides casting a cold incidental light on the habits of critics). If I now find Ovid 'a single real person' rather than a mere bundle of irreconcilable masks, if I agree that

contrary

To what you may read somewhere else, he's so human he tears you
Apart, he's immensely creative, he's far more complex, Far wider
in vision and tougher than most people think,

that is, to a very large degree, Dr Preston's doing, and I would like to
express my gratitude to her for so generously sharing her vision with
me. It is, perhaps, not without interest that she is a research scientist
rather than a classical scholar.

But one debt stands out above all the rest, and that is to my wife
Carin. Almost every line translated here I have discussed with her over
the years till it is hard to remember just where her ideas or insights
end and mine begin. Her keen ear for the nuances of the Latin
language, her shrewd understanding of political and psychological
realities, and her delicate feeling for the poetic *mot juste* have
contributed more to this book than I find it easy to express. Above all,
she has sustained me throughout the long haul with a blend of
encouragement, affection and pungent criticism that offered stimulus
and correction, by turns, at the precise moments when each was most
needed. What I owe to her is incalculable. This final version, with all
its faults—*quidquid hoc libelli, qualecumque*—is hers: a poor return for so
much, but at least a labour (appropriately for Ovid) of love.

Austin, Texas
December 1981

P. M. G.

INTRODUCTION

I

We can reconstruct Ovid's life in more detail than that of any other Roman poet: a fortunate accident, since his life and his work are interrelated in a peculiarly complex fashion. Whatever our beliefs concerning the relation of person to *persona* in his poetry (see below, p. 59), it cannot be denied that the work of Ovid's earlier years provided at least the official excuse (p. 49) for his exile from Rome to the Black Sea, while his life as an exile provided the material—and the stimulus—for his two final collections of verse. So intimate a connection between life and art has its hazards, which Ovidian scholars have not always fully appreciated. The famous autobiographical poem (*Tr.* 4.10) is a selective and schematized account of Ovid's familial background and poetic career, remarkable as much for what it omits as for what it includes. While it is true that, because of Ovid's own testimony, we do not have to rely exclusively on later hearsay from such witnesses as Suetonius or St Jerome, this comes as a mixed blessing: the poet's artful self-portrait sets almost as many puzzles as it solves. The line between selective fact and creative fiction is always a narrow one, and never more so than in the case of a poet or novelist who draws his chief material from the details—however transmuted—of his own life. Thus it becomes more than usually important to begin by establishing Ovid's *vita*, since this will then give us some sort of a pattern against which the creative *persona* can be evaluated. The two, as we shall see, are often more nearly identical than modern criticism is disposed to admit.

Like almost every other Roman poet, Ovid was not a native of Rome. Publius Ovidius Naso, to give him his full name—the cognomen Naso means 'Nosy': a relative of Ovid's bore the corresponding title of Ventrio, i.e. 'Pot-belly'—came from Paelignian stock. The Paeligni dwelt on the east side of central Italy, about ninety miles from Rome, occupying a stream-fed upland valley, ringed by mountains, in what is now known as the Abruzzi. The lush fertility of this enclosed plateau contrasts sharply—now as in Ovid's day—with the snowcapped peaks and wild forests that surround it. The Paeligni, tough Italian peasants and (surprisingly for such an area) excellent horsemen, had had generally good relations with Rome under the Republic. However, during the general insurrection of Rome's allies known as the Social War (90–88 BC), the first rebel capital was established at Corfinium, in Paelignian territory, and the Paeligni fought valiantly for the Italic

cause; but when they surrendered they were at once granted Roman citizenship. At the outbreak of the Civil War, in February 49 BC, another Paelignian *municipium*, Sulmo, tipped the scales in Caesar's favour by opening its gates to Mark Antony, and bringing over seven Pompeian legions; Corfinium, with fifteen, followed suit. The Julian house thus had good reason to be grateful to Sulmo: and when Augustus was searching the Italian *municipia* for notables fit to serve in what he hoped would be a broader-based, more truly representative Roman Senate, Sulmo was one of the towns to which he naturally turned.

Sulmo, now Sulmona, lies down in the flat, rich plain, as Ovid so well describes it (*Am.* 2.16.1–10, *Tr.* 4.10.3–4). The town has been rebuilt since the great earthquake of 1706, but still vividly cherishes the memory of its most famous son, with a blend of fact and fantasy that would have delighted the poet himself. The acronym SMPE (*'Sulmo mihi patria est'* – 'Sulmo is my homeland') appears at the head of official documents, and on many public buildings, in emulation of the more famous Roman SPQR. In the courtyard of the town's chief school, the Collegio Ovidio, Ovid's (medieval) statue is on display, and the ruins of what is claimed to be his family villa lie on a spur above the valley a few miles away. To judge from his poems, what Ovid liked about Sulmo was its lushness: to the mountain landscape, the local *contadini*, he seems to have had an urban, and urbane, indifference. Local gossip retorted, over the centuries, by inventing legends about him (Highet pp. 191–2). He made love to a fairy beside the Fonte d'Amore, the Spring of Love. He sits guarding his treasure in an underground chamber with an iron mace. On the night before the Annunciation he drives through the town in a four-wheeled carriage, making a fearful din, to scare thieves away. And of course, 'Viddie' dared to seduce the Emperor's daughter, and was sent away to Siberia, and died of cold.

When Augustus was considering senatorial possibilities from Sulmo, at some point after 31 BC, Ovid's family, *prima facie*, merited his serious attention. Its members had held Roman citizenship for generations, and were regularly admitted to the Equestrian Order. Unlike so many new *equites*, they had not been recently ennobled by the fortunes of war or the sudden acquisition of wealth (*Am.* 1.3.8, 3.15.5–6; *Tr.* 4.10.7–8; *EP* 4.8.17–18). They were local landowners, of Paelignian stock, reasonably well-off (no equestrian status otherwise: cf. *Tr.* 2.11off., 4.10.7–8) but thrifty as well as ambitious. The then head of the family, now in his fifties, had two young sons, born exactly a year apart, on 20 March 44 and 43 BC: the younger of these two was the future poet. Here Augustus found—or thought he found—what he had been looking for. The two boys were granted the rank of

equites (cf. *Tr.* 2.90), in anticipation of their subsequent admission to the Senate and advancement up that political ladder known as the *cursus honorum*. Despite Ovid's own remarks on the subject, this honour was not hereditary, though the sons of *equites* could, it is clear, obtain admission to the Order more easily than most of those who fulfilled the other requirements (e.g. a minimum capital reserve of 400,000 sesterces). It is important to bear Ovid's early political grooming in mind when considering his subsequent career.

II

Ovid and his brother were born in stirring and troubled times, that had witnessed Julius Caesar's assassination and—as Ovid himself reminds us, in order to fix the date (*Tr.* 4. 10.5–6)—the death of both consuls (A. Hirtius, C. Vibius Pansa) after defeating Antony at Mutina (43 BC). When the victory of Actium, in 31 BC, finally brought peace to a country too long torn and drained by civil war, Ovid was twelve, and newly arrived in Rome (see below): too young to be swept up in the wave of gratitude, relief and enthusiasm that had fired even so essentially private a poet as Virgil; just young enough, a decade or so later, to take the Pax Augusta for granted, even to find it a little *vieux jeu* and, more than a little vulgar. As Auden (probably with Ovid at the back of his mind) wrote in *Letters From Iceland*:

We were the tail, a sort of poor relation
To that debauched, eccentric generation
That grew up with their fathers at the war
And made new glosses on the noun Amor.

The propaganda for imperial destiny and moral regeneration that had been developed, with such skill and enterprise, by Maecenas was to make no impression on him. Self-centred, an intellectual hedonist (though interestingly, no *bon vivant*: he preferred to keep his senses sharp), and *engagé* only in the sense of enjoying sophisticated company, this urbane individualist was perhaps the worst possible choice that Augustus, or his representatives, could have made to promote as a potential future senator.

Ovid never mentions his mother (which may or may not be significant) except as the anonymous half of a parental duo, and, finally, to record her death. Since his father was at least forty, and probably older, at the time of Ovid's birth (*Tr.* 4.10.77–82, 93–8, and below, p. 31), she is unlikely to have been his first wife. The boys received their initial schooling at home (*Tr.* 2.343–4), and if, which seems likely, the family followed upper-class Roman tradition, it

would have been their mother (Tac. *Dial.* 28) who supplied it until they reached the age of seven. From that point their education would be taken over either by their father, or in the local school. If we can trust one anecdote in a late *vita* of the poet, the former may have been the case. Ovid's father rebuked him severely for scribbling poetry when he should have been doing homework, whereupon the boy exclaimed: '*Parce mihi! nunquam versificabo, pater!*' ('Forgive me, Dad! I'll never write a verse!'). The words, of course, as we might expect (Tr. 4.10.19–20, 25–6), form a neat pentameter, with just one dubious quantity to make the impromptu line look more plausible.

At the age of twelve (cf. *Met.* 8.241–3) Roman schoolboys underwent two or more years of secondary education, in grammar, syntax and literature, at the establishment of the *grammaticus*. We do not know whether, in 31 BC, such facilities existed at Sulmo: they had not done so at Arpinum half a century earlier, when Cicero was a boy, nor at Comum even in Tacitus' day (as we learn from the Younger Pliny, *Epp.* 4.13). It seems likely that Ovid's father, who certainly sent his boys to Rome for the next stage of their education, in the so-called 'rhetorical schools' (a misleading title for modern ears), may well, like many other ambitious parents—such as Horace's—have also preferred a Roman *grammaticus* (Tr. 4.10.15–16 suggests this).

It is with his transfer to Rome that Ovid first came into direct contact with that influential soldier and statesman Marcus Valerius Messalla Corvinus (64 BC–AD 8), whose client he appears to have been (see below, p. 35). In addition to his public career, Messalla was an orator, a historian and a literary dilettante, the patron of a group of poets that included Tibullus, Sulpicia and—till the success of the *Monobiblos* led Maecenas to make overtures to him—Propertius. The patronage of Messalla, and the support he gave his young protégé's early poetical efforts—a welcome counterweight, no doubt, to the pragmatic disapproval expressed by the boy's father—formed a crucial factor in determining the course of Ovid's future career. Once he had joined Messalla's circle, realized the obsessional quality of his devotion to the poet's calling and sensed his potential creative powers, the final issue was never really in doubt.

From now on he spent more and more of his time in literary pursuits, to the horror of his father, who reminded him tartly that there was no money in poetry, that even Homer died a poor man (Tr. 4.10.21–2). The picture is a familiar one: it calls to mind (of all people) the rag-merchant Echion in Petronius' *Satiricon* (§46), discussing his own son's education: 'I've just bought the boy some law books, as I want him to pick up some legal training for home use. There's a living in that sort of thing. He's done enough dabbling in poetry and such like.' Ovid's sense of filial duty, which, as we shall see

(below, p. 25), was stronger than many have supposed, made him do his best, very much against the grain, to replace poetry with prose, to train himself as a forceful speaker for the Forum and the law-courts. The frequent use in his work of legal imagery (see pp. 29 and 272) suggests that he may even have studied jurisprudence at home. In about 29 or 28 BC, at the age of fourteen or so, he entered upon the 'rhetorical' phase of his education, about which we have eyewitness evidence from the Elder Seneca (*Controv.* 2.2.1–12, esp. §§ 8ff.). Unlike his brother, who at once displayed a natural talent for oratory and legal debate, Ovid seems (as we might expect) to have exploited the rhetoricians–Arellius Fuscus, Porcius Latro, perhaps L. Junius Gallio, who became his personal friend—for anything that might improve his poetry, while impatiently discarding the rest.

As Higham well demonstrates ((1), pp. 41ff.), the rhetorical quality of Ovid's verse has been much exaggerated, and he seems to have given the rhetoricians at least as much as he got from them. Though Ovid had a habit (*Sen. Controv.* 2.2.8) of versifying Latro's aphoristic tags (cf. *Met.* 13.121–2, *Am.* 1.2.11–12), the process was a two-way one. Within a very few years it was Ovid the poet who had created a stock of erotic commonplaces (*sententiae*) on which would-be declaimers were encouraged to draw (*Sen. Controv.* 3.7.2, 10.4.25). There is no evidence to suggest that he pursued the art of *declamatio* once his education was over, and even during it the set debates (*controversiae*) clearly bored him (*Controv.* 2.2.12). *Even then*, Seneca believed, however pleasant and elegant Ovid's talent may have been, his speeches were nothing but poetry masquerading as prose (cf. *Tr.* 4.10.26). The details of formal *argumentatio* he found tiresome; his mind worked in essentially poetic terms throughout.

Furthermore, he had already, to judge from our scanty evidence, begun his exploration of the ever-interesting topic–heterosexual passion—that was to engross his creative powers, more or less exclusively, till he was over forty. Seneca quotes at length (*Controv.* 2.2.9ff.) from one *controversia* that he did declaim, in which his main theme was that true love knows neither sense nor moderation, that to weigh one's words and actions, to calculate the odds, is a mark of elderly caution: *sic senes amant*, thus do old men love. Here is adolescent passion *in excelsis*. Because Ovid was no more than seventeen at the time, the significance of this declaration has been generally missed. Boissier, indeed, thought that the young poet thus revealed himself 'already at school... what he always was'—a most curious error, when we recall that the deathless passion here advocated is that *between husband and wife*, and set such innocent marital devotion—the world well lost for love—against that cynical exploitation of sex already apparent by the end of the *Amores*, and

formalized as a literary seducer's manual in the *Art of Love*. How, and why, this advocate of passionate marriage transformed himself into Rome's self-styled *praeceptor amoris*—and cuckolds' scourge—is a problem that will bear closer examination than it has hitherto received.*

III

While Ovid and his brother were both still students in the rhetorical schools (*Tr.* 4.10.27–30) they assumed the *toga virilis*, the garb of manhood, in their case with the broad purple stripe that marked them out as destined for a senatorial career. This step was normally taken, during the Augustan period, at about the age of sixteen, and heralded a privileged youth's entrance to public life, his apprenticeship in the *cursus honorum* of administrative and military service. In Ovid's case this formal recognition of maturity was also the occasion for the first of his three marriages. He was 'given' a bride, he tells us—i.e. his family arranged a match for him—while still 'a mere boy' (*paene puero*, *Tr.* 4.10.69–70). This suggests an early betrothal even by Roman standards. The average age of a girl at marriage seems to have varied between thirteen and sixteen, that of a boy between fifteen and eighteen—see, e.g., Balsdon (1), p. 121—though the minimum legal age in each case was twelve and fourteen respectively. Ovid, then, will certainly not have been more than sixteen when he married his first wife, perhaps in 27 BC. The marriage, he says, was of short duration (though he does not tell us exactly how long it lasted); and he then goes on—almost forty years after the event—to dismiss his young wife, in one brief, bitter phrase, as 'neither worthy nor useful' (*nec digna nec utilis*).

Such a verdict, when we consider his subsequent reputation, is intriguing enough in itself; but it also needs to be related, chronologically, to the beginning of his literary career. Even before he assumed the *toga virilis* Ovid had been writing poetry (*Tr.* 4.10.19–30), and in this pursuit he was encouraged by his patron Messalla (*EP* 2.3.75–8, cf. 1.7.28–9), through whom he became acquainted with a wide circle of writers and *littérateurs*, including Propertius (see below, p. 32). Scarcely two years after his first marriage, at the age of eighteen or so ('when my beard had only been trimmed once or twice', *Tr.* 4.10.57–60), Ovid gave his first public readings. As he himself tells us (*ibid.*), the inspiration, and uniting theme, of the poems he then presented was provided by the mysterious girl—never yet convincingly identified, and often regarded as fictional—to whom he gave the pseudonym 'Corinna'. The poems, that is, were early drafts for the *Amores*. *Ex nihilo nihil fit*; and when we have made all

possible allowance for literary borrowings and inventive fantasy, it seems an almost irresistible conclusion that Corinna was based, at least in part, on Ovid's mysterious first wife.*

Various hints in the poems themselves tend to confirm such a supposition. It is striking how often Corinna seems to be more easily *available* to Ovid than would normally be the case with a mistress who was another man's wife or *maîtresse en titre*. At siesta-time she comes to his bedroom (1.5), while he is around in hers during the morning to watch her maid dress her hair (1.14.13–30), or, as dawn breaks, to enjoy post-coital slumber (1.13.5–8). He is behind the door, eavesdropping, while the old bawd instructs her on how to catch a wealthy lover (1.8.109ff.). The two of them visit the theatre (2.7.3) and the races (3.2) together. There is even a reference, when Corinna is planning a sea-voyage, to 'the household gods we shared, that familiar bed' (2.11.7–8). A surprising number of the poems acquire extra charm, irony and pathos if we consider their protagonists, not as common-or-garden lovers surmounting the usual social hazards, but as two married adolescents, exploring a booby-trapped world of adult passions and temptations, and playing private games, first with their society, then—*liaisons dangereuses*—with one another, and finally, in Ovid's case, with a literary audience. If we always sense the image, in the *Amores*, of Ovid the husband behind that of Ovid the lover, his marital portraits (e.g. the husband desperately anxious, against all the evidence, to believe his wife, 2.2.56ff.) take on a new dimension: in 3.4 he may even be talking to himself, and the nightmare of marital infidelity in 3.5—generally regarded as a spurious addition to the canon—acquires a new argument in favour of authenticity. Similarly, if the two abortion poems (2.13,14) describe action by Ovid's wife, rather than his mistress, then the narrator's doubts concerning his paternity (2.13.5–6) can be linked to the regular agonized complaints of infidelity in Bk 3, and the whole sequence be seen as arising from the break-up of a marriage rather than the end of an affair. *

If this theory has even an element of truth in it, it would go a long way towards explaining Ovid's psychological and literary metamorphosis during the years that followed. For whatever reason, he never wrote any poems like the *Amores* again: the vein—human or literary—was exhausted. The autobiographical *persona*, however much or little of a fictional construct it may have been, abruptly vanished, to be replaced in due course by that of the urbane and cynical *praeceptor amoris*, the seducers' friend. Only after his exile (see p. 48) did Ovid's special circumstances force him back into drawing on his own life and surroundings as material for his art. The romantic and naïve adolescent who had fallen passionately in love with his own wife (so unsmart: no wonder he kept Corinna's identity secret), and

celebrated that relationship with a heartfelt student *controversia* on the irresistibility of marital passion, was soon to learn the agonies of loss and betrayal, the masks with which that hurt could be concealed—and transmuted into art. If 3.5 is genuine early work, it shows the mask, for once, slipping: the reduction of the *Amores* from five books to three for a second edition (see p. 267) must have given him the chance, *inter alia*, to excise over-explicit or otherwise tell-tale material. Yet numerous hints remain. Even as it stands, the *Amores* may begin in an unmistakable mood of happy innocence (like that first magical chapter of Hemingway's *A Moveable Feast*), but it ends with innocence lost. Behind the hard-shelled sophisticate of the *Art of Love* we occasionally glimpse the sensitive young lover of the *Amores*, compensating for the wound he had received as a husband by a stylized assault on the whole marital condition, a Casanova-like commando raid against fidelity wherever it might be found.

IV

Ovid's first marriage, then, ended at about the same time as his training in the rhetorical schools—that is, when he had turned eighteen and was beginning to achieve public recognition as a poet. Soon afterwards he left Rome for nearly two years, travelling and sightseeing in Greece, Asia Minor and Sicily (*Tr.* 1.2.77–8, *EP* 2.10.21ff., *Fast.* 6.417–24). He makes no mention of this episode in his autobiographical elegy (*Tr.* 4.10). There was nothing unusual, however, about such a period abroad. Young men of good family, then as in the eighteenth century, very often rounded off their formal education by making the Grand Tour, visiting famous Greek sites, and studying for a while at Athens. After his divorce Ovid can hardly have found this change of scene anything but beneficial. We might have expected him and his brother to go abroad together, especially since he speaks (*Tr.* 4.10.31–2) of their closeness; but the brother died suddenly when only just twenty (*ibid.*), i.e. in the spring or summer of 24 BC, and it is a fair presumption that Ovid left Rome somewhat later.

It would be interesting to know more about Ovid's relationship with his father at this point. From his own account (*Tr.* 4.10.17ff.) it was his brother who satisfied the old man's family ambitions, Ovid who played the literary dilettante. When his brother died, however, Ovid became the sole heir, and was surely, as such, put under even stronger parental pressure to follow a public career. Perhaps he even persuaded his father to finance a Grand Tour by promising that he would, on his return, enter upon the official *cursus honorum*. No one has seriously examined the problem of Ovid's finances and familial obligations, yet they are crucial for an understanding of his life. He

was, it is obvious, a *rentier*, living off the income from family capital. But who controlled it? Under Roman law at this period a son, *even after marriage*, remained wholly in his father's *potestas*, and could not hold property in his own right. He lived off an allowance, or sometimes a capital settlement (*peculium*), over which his father retained full jurisdiction. To free a son of this paternal control called for a complex legal device of double emancipation.* Though many fathers doubtless treated their sons' *peculium* 'as being in fact, what it was not in law, the son's absolute property', we have no reason to suppose that this was so in Ovid's case. What little we know of his father suggests a dominating provincial paterfamilias of the old school, tight not only with his own money (*Am.* 1.3.10), but also—to judge from the repeated complaints of poverty scattered through the *Amores*—with his son's allowance. When we consider Ovid's life-style, that is scarcely to be wondered at. As the old man survived to the age of ninety (*Tr.* 4.10.77–8), he must be reckoned a powerful, and enduring, influence in Ovid's life.

At this point, it is clear, he was still willing to risk a further substantial investment in his surviving heir's education, presumably with an eye to long-term political and financial recoupment from Ovid's future senatorial career. That Ovid had benefited financially from his marriage and divorce seems unlikely. At all events he now left Rome, in the company (and under the tutelage) of a poet named Macer, about whom, it is safe to say, we know a good deal less than might be assumed from the standard literary handbooks. Ovid lists him with other contemporary Roman poets (*EP* 4.16.6), and tags him 'Ilian' Macer: from other allusions (*Am.* 2.18.1–3, *EP* 2.10.13–14) it appears that his *chef-d'œuvre* was a completion of the Trojan cycle dealing with events before and after the *Iliad*, and entitled *The War of Troy* (*Bellum Troianum*: Apul. *De Orthogr.* 18). He seems to have begun his literary career as a love-elegist, like Ovid or Tibullus (*Am.* 2.18.35–40, Tib. 2.6.1), only later transferring his attention to military epic. He was related to Ovid's third wife (*EP* 2.10.9–10), a long-term friend of Ovid himself (*ibid.*) and very probably a member of Messalla's literary circle. He is also supposed, with some plausibility, to have been the old acquaintance addressed in *Tr.* 1.8, on whom Ovid heaped reproaches for lack of sympathy and support at the time of his banishment.

That is all we can say about him with any confidence: it is impossible, on the evidence at our disposal, to identify him more closely. He was certainly *not* Aemilius Macer, the elderly didactic poet who read to Ovid his versified treatises on snakes and herbs (*Tr.* 4.10.44), since this gentleman died in 16 BC, and Ovid's travelling-companion was the addressee of a poem (*EP* 2.10) written in Tomis as

late as AD 12–13. Most scholars since John Masson, in the early eighteenth century, have confidently identified him as M. Pompeius Macer, the naturalized Roman son of Pompey's Greek adviser Theophanes of Mytilene; but this ascription, sanctified though it has become by long tradition, and now endorsed by Syme, (2), p. 73, will not do either. Let us look at the evidence for it.

Pompeius Macer wrote a tragedy, *Medea* (Stob. *Flor.* 78.7), plus a handful of epigrams—all, as we might expect, in Greek. If he is the procurator of Asia mentioned by Strabo (13.2.3, C. 618)—and that is far from certain—he will have served there, as Augustus' appointee, from about 20 BC. He seems to have been a successful and ambitious politician, who later acted as Augustus' director of public libraries (Suet. *Div. Jul.* 56.7), and held high office under Tiberius, whose personal friendship he enjoyed (Tac. *Ann.* 1.72). It is improbable, to say the least, that the procurator of Asia—even if the dates squared, which they do not—would spend a year or more of his official time travelling around with Ovid, including a prolonged visit (*EP* 2.10.21–2, 29–30) to Sicily. It is inconceivable that Ovid could have written this man a flattering petition from exile (*EP* 2.10) which wholly ignored both his public career and his Greek literary work, treating him exclusively as an epic, and a Roman, poet—characteristics nowhere else ascribed to him. The cognomen Macer is, unfortunately for us, an all too common one, and we shall, unless fresh evidence turns up, probably never be able to identify Ovid's friend with any certainty.

The tour seems to have been enjoyable for both of them. Elegiac and epic poet alike had opportunities to pick up local colour, at the site of Troy (*Fast.* 6.417–24), in Athens (*Tr.* 1.2.77), travelling from city to city down the Ionian coast (*Tr.* 1.2.78, *EP* 2.10.21) and, above all, in Sicily, where they spent the best part of a year (*EP* 2.10.29), and which is the only part of his trip that Ovid describes in any detail. The two of them apparently witnessed an eruption of Etna, which had been volcanically active for some years (Virg. *Georg.* 1.471, with Servius ad loc.; Appian *Bell. Civ.* 5.114,117; Dio Cass. 50.8.3). They visited Enna, and the shrine of the Palici near Leontini: both, interestingly, most famous for the slave-revolts that had been started there in the previous century (Diod. Sic. 34–5; 36.3.7, cf. 11.88,90). They travelled by boat and carriage, keeping up a non-stop discussion, as Ovid tells us (*EP* 2.10.33–8), of the most enjoyable sort, from dawn to dusk every long summer day. Years afterwards, from exile, his nostalgia could still evoke their journey in sharp and loving detail.

Ovid was back in Rome by the winter of 23/22 BC, and dutifully set about his planned career. As a prelude to his official duties, he must have studied public administration and law, as all young senatorial

aspirants did at this stage, most often under an eminent juriconsult (Cicero, earlier, had been a pupil of Scaevola): his legal training left its mark on his poetic vocabulary and imagery. This year or two of preparation was known as the *tirocinium fori*; it was normally followed by the *tirocinium militiae* (training for military service) after which the future senator would spend some time as a *tribunus militum*, or legionary staff officer, before resuming his more strictly political career. He would then hold one or more minor administrative offices until he reached the age of twenty-seven, when he became eligible to stand for the quaestorship. These four initial stages in the *cursus honorum*, beginning at the age of nineteen or twenty, thus generally lasted about two years each.

Now the interesting, and significant, point about Ovid's brief period of public life is that he avoided the *tirocinium militiae* altogether (*Am.* 1.15.1–4, *Tr.* 4.1.71). Though this omission may have been legitimate—Ovid hints that he was physically unfit for service (*Tr.* 4.10.37)—it brought him a good deal of adverse criticism, and goes far towards explaining his ambivalent, and somewhat self-conscious, attitude towards the soldier's life, his exaltation of the *militia amoris*. It also may well be the reason for his undertaking more than one vigintiviral office during the next few years. Such minor magistracies were almost certainly regarded as a bore, a mere tiresome stepping-stone to higher things. It is also true that disinclination to fulfil such political or military obligations had become fairly widespread during Augustus' reign. If there was a shortage of suitable candidates, Ovid may well have been glad to help out some more ambitious contemporary, who would doubtless be happier serving *his* apprenticeship as a military tribune on active service.

At all events, after completing his *tirocinium fori*, Ovid, as he tells us, duly held several different legal and administrative positions. He belonged to the three-man board of the *tresviri* (*Tr.* 4.10.34), though whether these were the *monetales* (who controlled the public mint) or the *capitales* (whose business, as Owen charmingly puts it, was 'to execute capital sentences, burn books, etc.') is not made clear; the general assumption that it was the latter may only reflect a Gilbertian instinct among scholars for heavy-handed prescient irony. He also belonged to the *decemviri stlitibus iudicandis* (*Fast.* 4.383–4), a board of ten which under Augustus had supervisory or presidential functions over the centumviral court, and in addition was himself a member of this court (*centumvir*: *Tr.* 2.93–6), which adjudicated in civil actions, mostly property or inheritance suits. Here, like Kipling in naval wardrooms, he picked up a good deal of technical jargon, which later resurfaced as more or less effective metaphor. Lastly, as an *eques* in good standing, Ovid was liable for duty as a *iudex privatus*, or private

arbitrator, a responsible position which he prides himself (*Tr.* 2.95–6) on having discharged in an impeccable manner, and which, again, left its mark on his poetic vocabulary.

V

Till he was of age to hold the quaestorship—that is, in 16 BC—Ovid could postpone his final choice between public service and that leisured *vita umbratilis*, ‘life in the shade’, the poet’s vocation (see pp. 37–8) to which he felt himself irresistibly drawn. Exactly how long he continued in the preliminary offices (or, indeed, how much of his time they took up) is uncertain. It seems likely, however, that his duties were not over-demanding, and left ample time for the literary life, since during this period (see p. 39) he composed enough poems to publish, c. 15 BC, as the first, five-book, edition of the *Amores*. He may also have preferred to postpone a final showdown with his father as long as possible. 16 BC, in fact, seems to have been a crucial date in his career. It formed a *terminus ante quern* for his decision whether or not to renounce the senator’s broad purple stripe, and revert to equestrian status; it heralded his first formal publication as a poet; and, almost certainly, it marked the date of his second marriage. It is hard to believe that these events were not, in some way, causally linked, or that Ovid’s father did not play a decisive part in them—perhaps insisting that if his son (spurred on no doubt by the phenomenal success of the *Amores*) insisted on retiring into private life, he should at least do his familial duty by taking another wife and getting an heir. As we have seen, any young man in Ovid’s position would be financially (and doubtless emotionally) vulnerable to this kind of pressure.

As it happens, we can determine the date of Ovid’s new marriage within fairly close limits. His one child, a daughter, was born to this second wife; she married young, at the earliest possible age (*prima iuventa*); and bore two children, by two successive husbands. At least before the second of these births, and perhaps before both of them, Ovid’s father died, aged ninety (*Tr.* 4.10.75–8). Ovid was fifty at the time of his exile (AD 8); if his father had died in that same year, he would have been forty when Ovid was born. In fact, he must have died earlier, since his wife survived him, but both were deceased before the scandal of Ovid’s exile broke (*Tr.* 4.10.80–84). Though not impossible, it is unlikely that the father was much more than fifty when his younger son was born. We can, then, assume that he most probably died at some point between c. 5 BC and c. AD 5, with a median date of 1 BC or AD 1. If we further assume that Ovid’s daughter bore her first child at about the same time, when not more than

fourteen–fifteen at the outside—then her own birth will fall c. 14 BC on the median date, and in any case neither earlier than 19 nor later than 9. If Ovid was in fact pressured into his second marriage by his father after finally (and as late as possible) rejecting a public career, then the median dates of 16–14 BC for that marriage, and the subsequent birth of a child—which would have been its prime object—fit perfectly on all counts. Ovid's second marriage, like his first, was of short duration; but since he goes out of his way to acquit his second wife of wrongdoing (*Tr.* 4.10.71), it seems highly likely that the union was terminated by death (perhaps in childbirth) rather than by divorce.

It is also reasonable to assume that, on the occasion of his son's remarriage, Ovid's father made a more generous, and more permanent, financial settlement in his favour. Though the marriage itself cannot have brought him any great satisfaction (no male child, and, with the lady's early demise, no hope of one), the death of his elder son must have made it correspondingly easier for him to settle capital on Ovid. Further, the young poet could now demonstrate ten years' literary work in the newly published *Amores*, plus enthusiastic acclaim from an appreciative public. At this point, clearly, Ovid's father capitulated, since Ovid *did*, from now on, devote all his time and energies to the writing of poetry and the social pleasures of the metropolis. (Patronage may also have played its part. It is likely that Messalla contributed to preserving Ovid's financial independence and, hence, his equestrian status.) For about ten years he remained single (see below, p. 41), as he had done during the decade c. 25/4–16/15, thus leaving ample scope for any minor liaisons to match those described in the *Amores*, and boasted of at the beginning of the *Art of Love* (1.29–30). How far we can believe Ovid when he claims that no scandal touched his name (i.e. that he was never shown to have committed adultery with a respectable woman, or to have got even a lower-class wife pregnant, *Tr.* 2.349ff.) is a matter for speculation. Equally, how far the 'autobiographical' details he gives are fiction, how far fact, will never be known, though it seems safe enough to assume that they are a mixture of both.

Despite the undoubted social prejudice at Rome against writing—or indeed anything but business, farming, soldiering or law—as a professional career (cf. Fraenkel, pp. 9–10), Ovid had grown up in an age of intense, and often brilliant, literary creativity. When he first began to give public recitations (c. 25 BC), Virgil had already published his *Eclogues* (c. 37) and *Georgics* (30/29), Horace his *Epodes* and *Satires* (c. 30), Propertius the *Monobiblos* (28), and Tibullus Bk 1 of his elegies (c. 27). Of these poets Virgil he 'only saw' (*Tr.* 4.10.51); Horace he heard recite, but does not claim as an acquaintance; while his brief friendship with Tibullus was interrupted by one or other of them

always being away from Rome, and cut short by Tibullus' premature death in 19 BC. Sextus Propertius, however (b. ? 50 BC, d. before 2 BC), was Ovid's close companion, bound to him by that untranslatable thing, *sodalitium* (*Tr.* 4.10.46), something both stronger and more formal than 'intimacy' or 'friendship'. Like Ovid, he was a provincial *eques*, a native of Assisi in Umbria; like Ovid again, he abandoned the advocate's profession for that of poet, the more easily in that his father had died during his childhood, and he therefore came into his inheritance—sadly diminished through requisitioning for the veterans of Antony and Octavian—on attaining his majority (*Prop.* 1.21, 22; 4.1.127–34). He now established himself in Rome, shortly before Ovid's arrival there as a schoolboy; fell, briefly, in love with a girl named Lycinna (*Prop.* 3.15.3–6); joined Messalla's literary circle; and, c. 30 BC, became totally infatuated with a woman whose real name, it seems, was Hostia (*Apul. De Mag.* 15), but to whom in his poems he gave the pseudonym of 'Cynthia', by which she remains better known to this day. She was probably an upper-class married lady (cf. Williams, pp. 529–35) rather than the freedwoman or courtesan of earlier scholarly tradition. The affair, and the poems it generated, must have been familiar to Ovid while he was still an impressionable adolescent. Propertius regularly read Ovid his work (*Tr.* 4.10.45–6), and Ovid, who had a retentive memory, repeatedly imitates, parodies, adapts or alludes to it in his own poems. This is not surprising. Propertius, too (Syme, (2), p. 188), 'speaks for the primacy of love and poetry'; reveals, indeed, a quietly subversive streak in his work, despite the fashionable imperial trappings he flaunts.

The other minor poets whom Ovid lists (*Tr.* 4.10.41ff., *EP* 4.16.5–38) suggest, with some force, the neoteric, post-Hellenistic tradition that preoccupied itself with mythology, didacticism and, above all, literary epic, the latter often a thinly disguised form of political flattery or propaganda. The tradition even developed a polite formula (*recusatio*) for refusing invitations to publicize and ennoble the exploits, generally military, of important men. The full achievement of Augustan poets such as Horace and Virgil can only be measured in terms of the agitprop pitfalls which they managed to transcend or avoid—as the *Georgics* and the Roman Odes bear ample witness. It is hard to believe, on the other hand, that Aemilius Macer (see above, p. 27) showed himself any more inspiring on the subject of snakes than did Nicander. Ponticus composed what was doubtless a very dull *Thebaid*, and Propertius dutifully compares him to Homer (*Prop.* 1.7.1–4) 'if only the Fates are kind to his verse'—they weren't, alas; Bassus and his iambics failed even to rate a mention by Quintilian. The group, like every literary circle the world over, clearly operated by mutual puffing, from which some members benefited more than

others. There is something infinitely depressing about the roll-call of forgotten poetasters in Ovid's last published poem (*EP* 4.16; cf. Syme, (2), pp. 105–6): the rehashers of old mythological themes, the imitators of Callimachus, the nationalist drum-beaters and the scribblers of epic esoterica, sedulous pasticheurs, all, churning out that synthetic drivel which Persius and others were to castigate so fiercely half a century later.

VI

It is ironic when we reflect that the young Ovid regarded all these poets, without distinction, or at least said he did, as so many gods on earth (*Tr.* 4.10.41–2): that passage does not read as though written tongue in cheek. It is doubly ironic when we study the enormous social gap that existed between the literary world of Rome (not to mention Ovid's non-literary friends) and those powerful, well-connected, mostly aristocratic patrons on whom that world depended for its support and encouragement. Such support was not always, or indeed chiefly, financial in the strict sense, but rather a matter of social promotion, public relations, influence-peddling: the establishment of a salon, the authoritative endorsement of a reputation, the opening of the right doors. Few things are more striking in Ovid's work than the contrast between the literary-erotic exhibitionist of the *Amores*, the blasé *praeceptor amoris* of the *AA* and *RA*, the manipulator of gods and men in the *Metamorphoses*—a *persona* whose central element is brilliant self-assurance—and the humble petitioner who emerges in the poems of exile (see below, pp. 46ff.), revealing, with uncomfortable precision and clarity, just how socially precarious his position in Rome had always been (cf. now Syme, (2), p. 76). As Owen and others have pointed out, he uses a quite different tone when addressing his patrons from that which marks poems addressed to friends and associates. Significantly, the former are, for the most part, known and identifiable, while his closest intimates—Celsus, Brutus, Atticus, Carus—remain shadowy figures, social and historical ciphers only surviving from time's trash-heap because Ovid happened to mention them. He exalts *probitas* above pedigree (*EP* 1.9.39–40, *Met* 13.140–41), a sure mark of his own milieu.

Among his patrons the most influential was Messalla, who from the beginning encouraged his literary interests, and provided the salon in which Ovid, like Tibullus, could publicize his work to best advantage. M. Valerius Messalla Corvinus (64 BC–AD 8) served as *legatus* to Cassius at Philippi; he then switched his support to Antony, but abandoned him in disgust because of Antony's conduct in Egypt, and finally joined Octavian, holding a key command at Actium (31 BC). In 25,

about the time of Ovid's emergence as a poet, he became Rome's first City Prefect, but, for what ever reason, resigned five days later, * devoting himself thereafter to a distinguished career at the bar. He died aged seventy-two, some months before Ovid's exile, and it is just possible that the loss of his powerful advocacy (he had been a close personal friend of Augustus) was what left the poet so fatally vulnerable to denunciation by enemies or rivals (see p. 43).

Messalla's patronage of Ovid was continued, though with differing degrees of enthusiasm, by his two sons, Messalinus and Cotta Maximus—both, we may note, strong supporters of Tiberius (see now Syme, (2), p. 117–34). In the case of Messalinus, a distinguished soldier but a political hack, this support came very close to fawning servility (Tac. *Ann.* 1.8.5, 3.18.3). Ovid did not know Messalinus well, and the poems he addresses to him (*EP* 1.7, 2.2) are couched in tones of the most abject and distant respect. With Cotta Maximus, however, who was about twenty years younger than he was, and whom he had known as a child, Ovid achieved something approaching genuine intimacy: perhaps the nearest he came to such a relationship with any of his patrons (but see below on Graecinus). Tacitus (*Ann.* 6.5,7; 4.20), Persius (*Sat.* 2.72 with schol.) and the Elder Pliny (*HN* 10.57) may dwell on Cotta's luxury, gourmandizing and spendthrift improvidence, but to Ovid he remained the spirit of loyalty and generosity (*EP* 2.3.29, 3.2.5,103, 3.5.7). Other evidence confirms that this was not mere flattery on Ovid's part. It is interesting that Ovid was with Cotta on Elba in AD 8 (see p. 45) when news of the Emperor's displeasure reached him.

Another influential patron was the rich aristocratic dilettante Paullus Fabius Maximus (? 45 BC–AD 14), patron of literature (Juv. 7.95), the addressee of an ode by Horace (4.1), consul II BC, and a close intimate of Augustus: cf. Syme, (2), pp. 135ff. As his client, Ovid attended on him, was admitted to his dinner-table, read him new poems and even composed the epithalamium for his wedding (*EP* 1.2.129–35). Ovid's own third wife (see p. 41) had been a member of Fabius' household: probably a dependant or relative of his wife Marcia (ibid., 136–8), whose maternal aunt was the mother of Augustus. This connection probably also explains Ovid's acquaintance with the wealthy Sextus Pompeius (cos. AD 14), a collateral descendant of Pompey the Great, whose father had married Marcia's younger sister, thus ensuring himself at least a distaff relationship to the Imperial family. Though during Ovid's journey into exile Pompeius afforded him some protection, this does not in itself explain the tone of grovelling humility with which Ovid addresses the great man (see, e.g., *EP* 4.4 and 5, on Pompeius' consulship). The only other patrons whom Ovid mentions by name are two brothers, P. Pomponius

Graecinus and L. Pomponius Flaccus, of whom he seems to have known the former somewhat better (cf. now Syme, (2), pp. 74–5, 83). Indeed, their acquaintance dated back to the period of the *Amores*, where (2.10.1–2) we find Graecinus arguing that to love two women at once is an impossibility; though in later years, to judge by the somewhat formal epistles that Ovid addressed to him from Tomis (*EP* 1.6, 2.6, 4.9), they had, perhaps inevitably, drifted apart. Graecinus and his brother (the latter another intimate of Tiberius) seem both (*EP* 1.10.37) to have done what they could to ease Ovid's lot in exile. *

With none of these persons, it is clear, was Ovid truly intimate. His real friends were drawn, as we might expect, from those who shared both his social status and his literary interests: Julius Hyginus, keeper of the Palatine Library (Suet. *De Gramm.* 20), fellow-poets such as Propertius and Macer, Ponticus and Bassus (above, pp. 27, 32–3), or the various scholars, soldiers and minor officials who crop up as recipients of many of the *Black Sea Letters*. Even those closest to him, as we have seen, remain mere names to us, a reminder of how ruthlessly time eliminates all but a fraction of the material essential to reconstruct any social group. All we know about Ovid's companions is what we can glean from his poems: that Celsus (who died during Ovid's exile) had dissuaded him from suicide, and even planned to visit him in Tomis (*EP* 1.9), that Atticus was his inseparable fellow-socialite and most valued critic (*EP* 2.4.13–20), that Brutus acted as his editor and publisher (*EP* 1.1, 3.9; cf. *Tr.* 1.7, 3.14, 5.1; Syme, (2), p. 80), that Carus wrote a poem on Hercules and was tutor to Germanicus' children (*EP* 4.13.11–12, 47–8; 4.16.7–8). Most of these figures moved on the fringes of Roman high society, and were dazzled by its exclusive glamour; none of them truly belonged to it. They were, in essence, middle-class intellectuals. Ovid and Propertius, old-fashioned *equites* from the provinces, probably enjoyed as much social prestige as any of them.

Such was the milieu in which, after renouncing his senatorial career, Ovid settled down to the leisured existence of a poet with private means, a literary celebrity and man-about-town. To judge from his total output (see p. 39) he must have had ample time for the pleasures of the metropolis, the dinners and parties, the plays and ballets, days at the races and evenings over wine, of which we get so vivid and kaleidoscopic a picture in the amatory poems. It would be strange, too, if the self-portrait that emerges from the *Amores* and the *Art of Love*, of an urbane gallant with a perpetually roving eye, was an unadulterated fiction. Even if we credit him with unswerving marital fidelity during his brief second marriage, he was very soon fancy-free and on the town once more, sauntering through the shady colonnades, eyeing the flash of an ankle, the lift of a skirt, scanning the crowds in

theatre audience or temple congregation for a promising pretty face.

Like many Romans, Ovid preferred to divide his time between town and country, using his house near the Capitol (*Tr.* 1.3.29–30) when socializing, but retreating to his country villa (*Tr.* 4.8.27–8) when he wanted to work in solitude. The latter was conveniently close, only three miles or so outside Rome, on a pine-clad hillside overlooking the junction of the Via Clodia and the Via Flaminia (*EP* 1.8.43–4); Ovid used to write out in his orchard (*Tr.* 1.11.37), and much enjoyed gardening for relaxation (*EP* 1.8.45ff., cf. 2.7.69). Sometimes, too, he would make the ninety-mile journey to his father's estate at Sulmo (*Am.* 2.16). But the magic of the city always drew him back; even in exile, he confesses, it is not for the countryside that his heart yearns (*EP* 1.8.41). The nostalgic visions that haunt him are of temples and porticoes, public gardens, formal fountains; the only greensward he misses is that of the Campus Martius (*ibid.*, 35–8). *Urbanitas* was his watchword.

VII

It is noteworthy that, for fifteen years or so, Ovid's rate of production, now he was at last enjoying the *vita umbratilis*, remained almost exactly what it had been during the decade (25–16) that he spent on the *Amores*, i.e. about 500 lines *per annum* of finished work, a figure hot strikingly in excess of that achieved by Virgil, and some answer to those critics who accuse him of glib facility in composition. Original drafts certainly accounted for much more: as Ovid himself tells us (*Tr.* 4.10.61–2), he wrote a good deal, but burnt any material that failed to meet his own critical standards. During this period he published *Heroides* 1–15, his lost tragedy *Medea*, and all the material contained in the present volume: his revised three-book edition of the *Amores*, the *Art of Love*, the *Cures for Love* and the little didactic squib (of which only a fragment survives) *On Facial Treatment for Ladies*. But thereafter his production-rate, hitherto remarkably consistent, takes an enormous upward turn. The *Cures for Love* appeared in AD 1. Seven years later, at the time of his relegation to the Black Sea, he had written fifteen books of the *Metamorphoses*, totalling almost 12,000 lines, and six of the *Fasti*, which adds about 5,000 more. On the face of it this represents a jump from 500 to about 2,500 lines *per annum*; and however much we modify this figure—e.g. by treating the *Metamorphoses* as unrevised, and by assuming that work on both the *Metamorphoses* and the *Fasti* had begun long before AD 1—there still remains a quite extraordinary burst of increased creativity to account for. *

What is more, the scope and subject-matter of his poetry were

similarly transformed. There is a symbolic appropriateness, at every level, in his new architectonic, indeed epic, preoccupation with mythological metamorphosis, with 'young girls who watched' (in Caroline Preston's haunting phrase) 'strange feathers beginning to sprout from their delicate fingers'. His antiquarian investigations into the Roman calendar mark a striking change of mood, no less than topic, from that dedicated modernism he had shown in his work as *praeceptor amoris*, when he declared (AA 3.121–2): 'Let others worship the past; I much prefer the present, / Am delighted to be alive today', and went on to praise (127–78) modern 'Refinement and culture, which have banished the tasteless/ Crudities of our ancestors'. Above all, though Ovid retained all his old psychological acumen, he now, abruptly, abandoned that vein of fashionable eroticism which he had mined, with obsessional exclusiveness and great popular success, for over a quarter of a century. What lay behind so radical a change of direction, so remarkable an imaginative upsurge of new ideas?

It is, of course, possible that the vein was exhausted: after all, by AD 1 Ovid had reached his mid-forties, and could hardly go on writing exclusively about sex for the rest of his life. The age of Henry Miller still lay in the future. He may also have been scared off the subject. Augustus' draconian legislation against adulterers, beginning in 18 BC with the *Lex Iulia de adulteriis coercendis* (see pp. 71ff.), had forced him to modify, or at least to camouflage, the earlier elegiac convention of passionate devotion to, and pursuit of, someone else's wife. Hence his repeated, and wholly unconvincing, protestations that he was writing only for freedwomen and courtesans. Worse still, his *Art of Love* was published almost immediately after a scandalous *cause célèbre* involving Augustus' only daughter Julia, who in 2 BC found herself banished to a remote island, ostensibly (see p. 55) because of numerous and flagrant acts of adultery with an assortment of well-connected and politically embarrassing lovers (Veil. Pat. 1.100; Suet. *Div. Aug.* 19.64–5; Dio Cass. 55.10). But neither of these motives quite accounts for the sudden, and brilliant, change of poetic direction represented by the *Fasti* and the *Metamorphoses*. Can we, however tentatively, correlate this phenomenon with some significant change in Ovid's own personal circumstances?

His father's death and his third marriage both fall within the period under discussion. We have already seen (above, p. 31) that Ovid's father probably died c. 1 BC/AD 1: that is, about the same time as the publication of the *Art of Love*. When did Ovid remarry? We know that his third wife, by a previous husband, had a daughter who, at some point before AD 16 (Syme suggests AD 12), married P. Suillius Rufus. It is also virtually certain that this girl is the Perilla addressed by Ovid in *Tr.* 3.7, where he reminds her, wistfully, of how, before his exile, he

guided her own youthful efforts at poetry. * Thus she must have been fourteen or fifteen, at the least, in AD 8, and born not later than 7 BC: it follows that Ovid is unlikely to have married her mother (unless he acquired her pregnant, as Augustus did Livia) before 6 or 5, and it could have been considerably later. At the time of Ovid's exile his wife must have been at least thirty: five years later we find him wondering (*EP* 1.4.47ff.) whether her hair, like his, has begun to turn grey, whether misfortune has aged her as it has him.

Just enough is known about her background to make us wish we knew more. She was related to Ovid's friend and travelling-companion, the poet Macer (above, p. 26). More important was her (not clearly defined) standing, intimate but dependent, in the household of Paullus Fabius Maximus, where Ovid, himself the great man's client (*EP* 1.2.129–35), probably met her. Through Fabius' wife Marcia she enjoyed at least a nodding acquaintance with the Empress Livia (*Tr.* 1.6.25, 4.10.73). Thus to Ovid she must have represented not only stability and maturity, but also a friend (in every sense) at court. After her husband's banishment she remained in Rome to work for his recall; but it would be a mistake to treat their relationship as a mere *mariage de convenance*. Ovid vividly sketches the agony of their separation (*Tr.* 1.3.79ff.), and his letters to her from exile (*Tr.* 1.6, 3.3, 4.3, 5.2, 5.5, 5.11, 5.14; *EP* 1.4, 3.1) reveal a warmth, respect and intimate affection that contrast, often strikingly, with the underlying, or overt, attitude to women revealed in his earlier work. The largely narcissistic *Sturm und Drang* of the *Amores*, the chauvinistic Don Juanism of the *Art of Love*, the idea of love as pure sex, of sex as pursuit and capture—all this has vanished. For the first time ever, Ovid, or his poetic *persona*, is treating a woman as an equal, as an adult human being. The sad thing about this public correspondence—of which, of course, we have only one side—is the element of despair that finally permeates it: the exile's paranoia, the nagging anxiety that his wife, if not positively disloyal, could nevertheless, somehow, be doing more than she is to help him. The epistles, frequent at first, become more intermittent. After the long, half-irritable list of instructions and reminders (*EP* 3.1) dispatched late in AD 13, they cease altogether. But their cumulative impact makes it clear that not only was this marriage wholly different from Ovid's two previous ones; it marked a fundamental change in his concept of human relationships.

Thus it is very tempting to correlate his father's death, his third marriage and his new lease of poetic life into a causal nexus: to see his father's death as the psychological release that not only, at long last, gave him complete financial independence, untrammelled control of the family estates (see above, pp. 25–6), but also permitted—indeed perhaps encouraged—the new and more mature relationship into

which he now entered; to see this intrapsychic metamorphosis as the trigger-release (also controlling flow and direction) of a creative surge that produced, within a remarkably short space of time, both the *Metamorphoses* and the *Fasti*. If this causal nexus is valid, we can then posit a probable chronological sequence: the death of Ovid's father, perhaps about 1 BC, when Ovid was still engaged on the *Art of Love*, followed by the poet's remarriage a year or two later, c. AD 2, and his new poetic efflorescence. At that point Ovid himself would have been forty-five, his new wife in her early twenties, and his stepdaughter about nine.* His own daughter by his second wife was already married, to one Cornelius Fidus, whose sole claim to fame (apart from this relationship) was that Domitius Corbulo referred to him, in the Senate, as 'that depilated ostrich', an insult which apparently (Sen. *De Const.* 17.1) reduced him to public tears.

Despite his new wife's highly placed connections, and the more officially acceptable turn his work was now taking—the *Fasti* in particular offered just that blend of traditionalism and *Romanitas* most calculated to please Augustus—Ovid's position in Rome was more vulnerable than he ever seems to have realized till it was too late. Like all fashionable, and successful, literary men, he made personal enemies, who would not be slow to denounce his activities or otherwise intrigue against him when the chance arose: the best-known of these was the anonymous figure whom he attacked under the pseudonym 'Ibis', in 644 lines of elegiac invective (c. AD 9), and to whom he refers elsewhere (*Tr.* 3.11, 4.9, 5.8). 'Ibis'—his identity remains quite uncertain: he may have been a professional informer, a *delator*—carefully drew Augustus' attention to Ovid's more *risqué* erotic verse (*Tr.* 2.77–80), slandered the poet behind his back (*Tr.* 3.11.20, *Ibis* 14), and did his level best to rob him of his property (*Tr.* 1.6.9–14) through sharp litigation. He seems to have been a man whom Ovid had once trusted (*Ibis* 19), thus confirming the naïvety of which the poet accused himself (e.g. *Tr.* 3.6.35, *EP* 1.6.20). Despite Thibault's reservations (pp. 16–17), it seems more than likely that 'Ibis', or someone like him, both denounced Ovid to Augustus and hoped, by inducing a charge of *lèse-majesté* (*laesa maiestas*), to get the informer's cut from his victim's property.

Ovid was clearly a tempting target for vultures of this sort. As he himself had been well aware since he first began to publish, literary fame could compete neither with true social exclusiveness nor with a cool million in the bank. His own range of patrons was respectable, but not overwhelmingly powerful, nor, indeed, always totally committed to his cause. Despite several appeals, it was not until AD 14 that Paullus Fabius Maximus agreed to petition Augustus on the poet's behalf—and then died before he got around to it. Though Ovid prided

himself on staying out of politics, hostile critics could point to innumerable passages in his work that mocked just about every aspect of Augustus' regime, from its military imperialism (and recruiting problems) to its much-touted schemes of moral regeneration. Ovid had laughed, in his patronizing way, at the pomp of Roman triumphs, the stuffiness of Roman law, the *rusticitas* of Roman virtue; he had advocated the pleasures of *otium*, the notion of sexual as the moral equal of military conquest. Above all, he had published a pseudo-didactic handbook of seduction which not only (despite his literary disclaimers) presented adultery as a high-class social game, but had proved immensely, and lastingly, popular among the very people at whom Augustus' moral reforms were primarily directed. He had, in fact, built up against himself, all unknowingly, a quite remarkable reserve of official ill-will. When the time came, this ill-will was to be concentrated with some effectiveness, and the *Art of Love* offered it a handy excuse for action.

VIII

The facts of Ovid's banishment are well-known, its true reason mysterious. Ovid himself lists two causes for it (*Tr.* 2.207, 4.1.25–6): an immoral poem, the *Art of Love*; and a 'mistake' or 'indiscretion' (*error*), the nature of which he never fully reveals. This *error* was clearly the main precipitant of Augustus' anger, to which the poem, though a contributory offence, for the most part served as a cover (*EP* 2.9.75–6). Its secret remains one of the most tantalizing enigmas in history, and has evoked a corresponding variety of more or less specious explanations, now conveniently tabulated, analysed and (for the most part) exploded in Thibault's useful monograph, *The Mystery of Ovid's Exile* (1964), to which subsequent scholarship has added comparatively little. In default of new evidence the mystery may well (as Thibault thought) be insoluble: the best we can hope to do is narrow down the possibilities, laying out the essential evidence, such as it is, and eliminating all speculation that conflicts with it. The direct evidence all stems from Ovid himself: oddly, though the exile of so famous a poet must have been a *cause célèbre*, the first surviving source apart from Statius (*Silvae* 1.2.254ff.) to mention it is Jerome, in AD 381. We cannot prove that he is not lying, but he had good reason to tell the truth (if not the whole truth), and, like Thibault (p. 116), I start from the working hypothesis that his statements, consistent enough with one another, are self-serving but reasonably honest, that his worst fault is *suppressio veri*. Despite Augustus' stern veto on any publication of the facts, nevertheless, Ovid's obsession with posterity drove him, compulsively, to scatter hints, some of them highly

suggestive.

In November AD 8, probably as a result of delation, information concerning some serious indiscretion (*error*) on Ovid's part came to the attention of Augustus, and to a restricted circle of other influential persons, including Ovid's patron and friend Cotta Maximus (*EP* 2.3.61ff.) At first Cotta was angry with Ovid; when he learnt the true facts of the case, however, anger turned to irritated sympathy ('they say you groaned over my mistakes', *ibid.*, 66), and he quickly wrote Ovid a letter from Elba, where he was staying, saying he was sure Augustus could be placated. Before the Princeps took action Ovid travelled north to consult Cotta; yet even then, when Cotta asked him if the report was true, he still prevaricated, through a mixture of fear, shame and emotional distress (*EP* 2.3.85–90). It was now that the summons arrived ordering the poet back to Rome for a private hearing before Augustus. It appears that Ovid was subjected to a severe tongue-lashing (*Tr.* 2.133–4) by the outraged Emperor: there was, to ensure secrecy, no formal trial. Ovid was to be banished, in perpetuity, to the remote coastal settlement of Tomis, near the mouth of the Danube estuary, in the still unsettled province of Moesia. At least his life had been spared (*Tr.* 2.147, 4.4.45). The banishment was of the type known as *relegatio* (*Tr.* 2.135–8, cf. *Tr.* 4.4.46, 5.2.55–8, etc.), in which the victim retained his property and citizenship, but had his place of exile specified (others could, within limits, reside where they chose, provided it was a certain distance from Rome). In Ovid's case, his *Art of Love* was also banned—an unusual step—from Rome's three public libraries (*Tr.* 3.1.59–82, 3.14.5–18), and he was required to leave Rome by December (*Tr.* 1.3.5–6, 1.11.3), a stipulation which made his journey both unpleasant and dangerous (*Tr.* 1.4, 1.11.13ff.). This sentence was conveyed, both to Ovid and to the public at large, by an imperial edict (*Tr.* 2.135, 5.2.8). In the case of *relegatio* a pardon was always, in theory, possible, and the edict would become invalid, unless confirmed by his successor, on the death of the emperor who issued it (Owen (2), p. 46).

Whatever the specific reason for Ovid's banishment (see below pp. 49–59), it is impossible not to perceive a refinement of calculated cruelty behind the sentence chosen for him. Hope was not removed: there always remained a possible mitigation of sentence. Thus the poet who had so coolly mocked imperial aspirations would be reduced to a caricature of the toadying, grovelling courtier, addressing endless hyperbolic flatteries and pleas to those whose beliefs he had offended. He would, to borrow an expressive modern phrase, be left to dangle slowly in the wind (and a freezing wind at that), his pose of sophisticated superiority and indifference gone, forced into a humiliating public embracement of the Augustan myth he had once

found so risible, deification, triumphs and all (e.g. *EP* 3.4). No Communist show-trial ever staged so public, and prolonged, an exercise in recantation and self-abasement. While there was even the slimmest chance of recall, or even of being transferred to a less harsh environment, Ovid would continue to bombard the capital with fawning rhetoric, with gross endorsements of the regime he had hitherto treated, in his apolitical way, as a kind of bad joke. As a revenge for all the years of superior private sniping, the *de haut en bas* accusations of middle-class vulgarity and pompous propaganda, this particular punishment fitted the crime with quite horrific aptness.

To execute this social butterfly, who was, after all, the most famous living poet in Rome, would have been far too easy, and might well have provoked a serious outcry at a time when Augustus had other still more serious problems on his hands (see p. 55). *Relegatio* was a far better answer: it gave a spurious appearance of clemency and—the crucial point—let Augustus and his advisers dictate Ovid's place of residence. Tomis, from their viewpoint, was a psychological masterstroke. It robbed Ovid not only of Rome, but of that whole cultured milieu on which he depended for his inspiration. It showed him, the hard way, how the empire he so despised was run, exposing him daily not only to barbarian *mores* but also to the very real threat of enemy incursions. It struck at his instrument of expression, the Latin language, by marooning him in a linguistic wilderness of debased Greek, 'Sarmatian' and Getic: 'Composing a poem you can read to nobody', he complained bitterly (*EP* 4.2.33–4), 'is like dancing in the dark.' To the Getae, *he* was the barbarian (*Tr.* 5.10.37). Above all, it stripped him of his literary conceits, turned all his smart military and naval metaphors for the *vie amoureuse* into appalling fact. Now he sailed real stormy seas to reach his destination, suffered the cold of real winters, donned a real helmet to help fight off marauding tribesmen. By a supreme irony, the erstwhile *tenerorum lusor amorum* became totally indifferent to sex (*EP* 1.10.33–4). Life, as he himself recognized (*Tr.* 5.1.25–8), had indeed overtaken art in his creative world. Another exile, tougher and more self-reliant, might have transported his library to Tomis, completed the *Fasti*, made a final revision of the *Metamorphoses*, and divided the rest of his life between mythic fantasy, antiquarianism, and the exploration of the new and alien terrain in which he found himself. But Augustus knew his man. Ovid never really adapted his outlook to the bleak rigours of Tomis, and devoted almost all his energies to angling for an imperial pardon—thus denying himself the companionship of his loyal wife, who was left behind in Rome to work for his recall (*Tr.* 1.2.41, 1.3.81–8, etc.).

So, in the December of AD 8, after an agonized last night in Rome (*Tr.* 1.3), Ovid set out on his journey into exile. He was never to

return. Sailing down the stormy Adriatic and through the Gulf of Corinth, he recalled making the same voyage, in happier days, as a student on his way to Athens (*Tr.* 1.2.77). From the Isthmus he took another ship to Samothrace, where he stopped for a while, clearly spinning out the trip as long as he could, and thence sailed for Tempyra in Thrace. * From here, in the spring of AD 9 (*Tr.* 1.10), he made his way to Tomis overland. He travelled slowly enough for news from Rome to catch up with him at various points (*Tr.* 1.6.15, 1.9.39–40). In addition to his abandonment by many of his friends, and the efforts of ‘Ibis’ to obtain his property at home (above, p. 43), he seems to have been robbed or otherwise swindled by the servants who accompanied him (*Tr.* 1.11.27ff., 4.10.101; *EP* 2.7.61–2). He reached Tomis by autumn, before the severe Black Sea winter set in. This outpost of empire was to be his home, though he did not then know it, for the rest of his natural life.

IX

It is not only inevitable, but also reasonable, that the riddle of Ovid’s *relegatio* should continue to attract such intense curiosity, and by no means only among scholars. By imperial fiat the greatest Roman poet of his day was plucked from the society which sustained his creative drive and subjected, over nearly a decade, to the kind of humiliating exile that might have been designed ‘to arrest and freeze forever his generous stream of inspiration’ (Owen (2), p. 36). At the very least we want to know *why*, since, *prima facie*, there is a disturbing irrationality about the whole proceedings. If the true cause of exile (as some still maintain) was the *Art of Love*, why did Augustus delay for so many years before taking action against its author? If the object of banishment was to stop Ovid’s mouth, why was he allowed, indeed encouraged, to correspond freely with friends in Rome (*EP* 3.6.11–12)? If, as Ovid frequently asserted, he had committed no indictable crime (e.g. *EP* 2.9.71, cf. *Tr.* 3.1.51), why did Augustus remain so inflexible? Finally, in view of the punishment chosen, is there not a suspicion of calculated sadism and vindictive personal spite about the entire episode?

That the *Art of Love* was, in fact, one count of a double indictment (*Tr.* 4.1.25–6) Ovid assures us on innumerable occasions (Owen (2), pp. 10–11, Thibault, pp. 30–31). The main objection to the poem seems to have been its didactic quality, the notion of Ovid as a conscious propagandist for seduction reduced to a fine an, a teacher of adultery (*Tr.* 2.212, 348; *EP* 2.10.15–16, 3.3.47–8, 58). He makes it quite clear, however, that the second charge against him, referred to habitually as his ‘mistake’ or ‘indiscretion’ (*error*), was the more

serious of the two (*EP* 3.3.71–6, also 2.9.72–6). While this does not justify our treating the *Art of Love* merely as a ‘cover’, designed to distract attention from the more sensitive area in which Ovid’s *error* lay (*Tr.* 2.7–8, 345–6)—it is clear that Augustus found it a morally subversive poem, as indeed by his (public) standards it was*—it does focus our main attention on something that Ovid, despite himself, was constrained (*Tr.* 2.207–12) to treat as a top-level secret. Despite the efforts of countless investigators, the enigma persists.

This official cloak of secrecy, referred to on various occasions (*Tr.* 1.5.51–2, 3.6.32, 4.10.100, etc.) is one of the more significant clues in our possession. Augustus’ government, like most modern ones, habitually, and effectively, suppressed the general circulation of embarrassing or unpalatable facts (Dio Cass. 53.19.3). In Ovid’s case, however, ‘everybody’, i.e. the usual inner circle of *cognoscenti*, knew very well what had taken place (*Tr.* 1.1.23, 4.10.99, *EP* 1.7.39). This does not imply (indeed, all our evidence suggests precisely the opposite) any acquaintance with the true facts on the part of the general public. Whatever Ovid’s *error*, it could not have been connected with a *well-known* public scandal—unless it somehow involved additional sensitive evidence, which revealed that scandal in a new light, and which Augustus was therefore determined to suppress. Ovid at one point (*Tr.* 3.4.4) links his downfall to ruinous connections in high places. The scandal involved ‘great names’ (*magna nomina*), as indeed we might have guessed from the strenuous campaign to suppress it. Had it not been for this unfortunate intimacy, he adds (*ibid.*, 13–14), he might still be happily at large in Rome. It is just conceivable, as Thibault argues (pp. 21–2), that the lost works of Seneca, Aufidius Bassus, Cremutius Cordus or, above all, Suetonius, contained the whole truth of the matter; but the absolute silence of the next four centuries—and indeed of extant authors such as Tacitus—argues strongly against such *ex post facto* knowledge. The balance of probability is that the secret was indeed well kept, that few were privy to it, and that for all practical purposes the truth died with Ovid, as he said it should (*Tr.* 1.5.51).

What other hints does Ovid give us? His *error* was unpremeditated (*Tr.* 4.4.43–4) and without any thought of personal gain (*Tr.* 3.6.33–4), yet the result of a complex chain of events (*Tr.* 4.4.37–8). It was not—a fact Ovid several times emphasizes, but which, as we shall see, conflicts with other aspects of his own testimony—a legally indictable crime (*Tr.* 1.2.97–8, 1.3.37–8, 3.1.51–2, 3.11.33–4, *EP* 1.6.25, 2.9.71, etc.). In particular, he had committed neither murder, poisoning nor forgery (*EP* 2.9.67–70), nor was he guilty of treasonable action (*Tr.* 1.5.41–2, 2.51–2, 3.5.45–6) or even treasonable talk (*Tr.* 2.446, 3.5.47–8) against Augustus. In fact, he had not *done* anything at all;

rather he had *seen* a crime committed by others, which apparently, to begin with, he had not recognized for what it was *Tr.* 2.103–4, 3.5.49–50), though he describes it *Tr.* 3.6.28) as ‘deadly’ or ‘fatal’ (*funestum*), an ambiguous epithet (see below, p. 58). It was, he says, a ‘more serious injury’ (*gravior noxa*) than any legal crime (*EP* 2.9.71–2). Yet if he was a mere witness, wherein did his culpability lie? Clearly, in *not reporting* the incident: a word at the right moment could have saved him *Tr.* 3.6.11–14, cf. *EP* 2.6.7–10). Why, then, did he keep silent? Again he gives us the answer: he was scared *Tr.* 4.4.39, *EP* 2.2.17), and so did nothing, in the vain hope that the scandal would blow over.

From this it sounds as though Ovid’s role in the affair was at best, peripheral: that of the smart but innocent man-about-town, the fashionable *praeceptor amoris* of the literary salons, taken up (rather like the late Stephen Ward) by Rome’s promiscuous *beau monde*, who stumbled accidentally into a dangerous situation, and then panicked. He repeatedly castigates himself—just as we would expect in the circumstances—for having been naïve and gullible (*Tr.* 1.2.100, 1.5.42, 3.6.35; *EP* 1.6.20, 1.7.44, 2.2.17). Yet this mere error of judgement (*Tr.* 4.10.89–90; *EP* 1.7.39, 2.6.7, 3.3.73, etc.) was, nevertheless, an improper act (*Tr.* 5.2.60, 5.11.17; *EP* 1.1.66, 1.6.21, 2.2.105, 2.3.33, 2.6.5, etc.) of which he felt ashamed (*Tr.* 5.8.23–4). Worse, it caused deep personal pain to Augustus (*Tr.* 2.209–10, *EP* 2.2.57–8) and was, indeed, a direct offence against him (*Tr.* 1.10.42, 2.134, 3.8.39–40, 5.7.8, 5.10.52; *EP* 2.2.21) of the type (it has been suggested) known as *laesa maiestas* (*lèse-majesté*: *Tr.* 1.5.84, 2.123, 3.6.23, 4.10.98; *EP* 1.4.44). We should, however, note that though Ovid repeatedly describes the Princeps as *laesus*, the *maiestas* we have to infer for ourselves; and *maiestas*, however loosely defined, was without doubt a legal offence. Ovid may be splitting hairs for his own benefit, but whatever his actual *error*, it was indefensible (*Tr.* 1.2.95–6), and the Princeps could well have imposed the death penalty because of it (*Tr.* 1.1.20). Though the wave of public dislike for Ovid which his *relegatio* produced (*Tr.* 1.1.23–4, 2.87) can be explained by society’s rejection of any official scapegoat, the immediate reaction even of Cotta Maximus (who not only learnt the facts but was Ovid’s patron) seems to have been one of anger (*EP* 2.3.61ff.).

This fact gains in significance when we recall that Cotta Maximus and his brother Messalinus were both strong partisans of Tiberius (certainly from the time his accession was assured), since Tiberius and his mother Livia were, and remained, implacably hostile to Ovid: Ovid’s own attitude to them, not surprisingly, is one of constrained, nervous and distant self-abasement (e.g. *Tr.* 2.161–6), in sharp contrast to the warm admiration (and hopes of favourable treatment)

he displays during these last years when addressing or referring to Germanicus (*EP* 2.1, 2.5.41–6, 4.8.23–88), for whose succession he prays (*EP* 2.5.75) and to whom, after Augustus' death, he rededicated his *Fasti* (*Fast.* 1.3–6, cf. *Tr.* 2.551). Germanicus had the clemency and humanity (Suet. *Calig.* 3.3, Tac. *Ann.* 2.73) which Tiberius so conspicuously lacked; better still, he was not only Tiberius' natural nephew, but (on the insistence of Augustus) his adopted son (Dio Cass. 55.13), and thus in direct line for the purple. Had Ovid survived a year or two longer, his hopes would have been dashed yet again: in AD 19 Germanicus died, probably by poisoning (Tac. *Ann.* 2.69–73; Dio Cass. 57.18; Suet. *Calig.* 1–7), and Tiberius' position became virtually unassailable, since his other adopted son, Agrippa Postumus, the brother of Julia II, had been secretly executed (Tac. *Ann.* 1.6) immediately after Augustus' death.

Such is the evidence at our disposal, and as Thibault reminds us (pp. 115–16), we have to reject any explanation that shows inconsistency with any part of Ovid's own explicit testimony. It is more probable that he was hinting at the truth than lying; and if he was lying, the mystery, short of fresh evidence, becomes by definition insoluble. The most we can concede is that he was playing down his own culpability in order to win a reprieve. We are looking, to recapitulate, for an indiscretion that took place in high society, was unpremeditated but part of a complex situation, was not *per se* indictable(?), brought Ovid no profit, and in fact consisted of his having witnessed (perhaps without full understanding at the time) a crime committed by others. In particular he emphasizes that he had taken no treasonable action against Augustus, that he had committed neither murder nor forgery, poisoned no one. If he had reported the incident he might have remained a free man, but he was scared to do so. He was also, he says, both naïve and gullible. Further, his *error* caused Augustus deep personal pain, and could (Ovid's language suggests) be in some sense categorized as *lèse-majesté*. It *could* have brought Ovid the death penalty, and he was ashamed of it. It also caused especial resentment in Livia, Tiberius and their adherents. He was obliged to keep it secret, though a limited number of people in Rome seem to have known the truth.

Thibault has earned the gratitude of all subsequent investigators by the exemplary way in which he has analysed, and refuted, countless implausible theories as to the nature of Ovid's *error*. We no longer need to waste space wondering whether the *praeceptor amoris* saw Livia nude in her bath, or Augustus committing paederasty, or the younger Julia engaged in incest; whether he gate-crashed a neo-Pythagorean séance, or the rites of the Bona Dea. Till the nineteenth century the rule was *cherchez la femme*; then variations of political

conspiracy became popular; latterly the *Zeitgeist* has had its turn, with Ovid's general attitude of smart atheistical urban hedonism provoking a violent reaction from the Augustan moral reformists. No specific theory advanced hitherto exactly fits the facts, and of the three main theories advanced, two can be dismissed out of hand. First, Ovid makes it clear that his *error* was a specific offence, so that though his social and religious attitudes may well have made him unpopular in official circles (cf. above, p. 44), they cannot have been the direct cause of his *relegatio*. Secondly, since he emphasizes that his *error* was to have kept quiet about something he had *seen*, we can rule out any personal involvement with a highly connected lady as being responsible for his downfall. Adultery, as Thibault reminds us (p. 54), is not an ocular offence.

Ovid's own statements, taken in conjunction with the pattern of historical events during the last decade or so of Augustus' reign, all point rather towards some sort of unwitting political *bêtise*, linked with the deadly factional struggle between Julians and Claudians for the succession, and carefully camouflaged by official public charges suggesting moral turpitude. This, as Syme has pointed out (*Tacitus*, Oxford, 1958, Vol. 1, pp. 403–4), was a useful device, particularly valuable in dealing with the two Julias, to conceal more serious, and politically sensitive, offences. Only in political and, probably, conspiratorial or otherwise treasonable circumstances does the lifelong *relegatio*, by private imperial edict, of a mere witness—let alone the danger of his execution over an arguably non-indictable offence—even begin to make any sense. As has long been recognized, such circumstances indeed existed in the years immediately prior to Ovid's exile.

In 2 BC a group of ambitious aristocrats had tried to establish themselves, through Augustus' daughter Julia, in a position where they could, after the death—whether natural or (Plin. *HN* 7.149) induced—of the Princeps, take over effective control of the empire (Syme, (2), pp. 193–8). The plot failed, and the scheme to murder Augustus, conceived by its more extreme proponents, surely in part dictated the Emperor's subsequent reluctant shift towards a 'Tiberian solution'. Significantly, it was Julia's sexual promiscuity that received most public attention when the scandal broke (see p. 40). The refusal of the 'Julian faction' to admit defeat, then or later, must surely be attributed to Augustus' own persisting ambivalence over the succession. By AD 4 two of his three grandsons were dead, in circumstances suspicious enough at least to start a rumour that Livia had somehow done away with them for her son's benefit (Tac. *Ann.* 1.3, Dio Cass. 55.10–11; cf. p. 345). Tiberius, whose earlier disgrace had encouraged the pro-Julian *coup*, had been adopted, *faute de mieux*,

by the ageing Emperor; though at the same time, characteristically still hedging his bets, Augustus made the new heir apparent himself adopt, not only his nephew Germanicus, but also Augustus' last surviving grandson, Julia II's brother Agrippa Postumus. That the former, in due course, was poisoned, and the latter executed, need surprise no one. A little earlier, perhaps in response to the considerable public criticism which her banishment still provoked, Julia I had been transferred from the island of Pandateria to a less severe place of exile: Rhegium (Reggio) in southern Italy (Tac. *Ann.* 1.53.1, Suet. *Div. Aug.* 65.3, Dio Cass. 55.13.1: Augustus, for whatever reason, came to repent his earlier harshness, Sen. *De Benef.* 6.32.2).

The years that followed, particularly the period between AD 6 and 9, saw Augustus' regime pass through an acutely critical phase. There were wars and uprisings in Illyria and Pannonia (Dio Cass. 55.27), a serious recruiting problem, increased taxation of senators and *equites* (with the added risk of disaffection that this brought), famine in Italy, and growing rumours, sometimes confirmed, of rebellion and conspiracy. Such circumstances could not fail to provoke some sort of attempt by the 'Julian faction'. The natural figureheads for any 'succession plot' would be the two Julias and Agrippa Postumus; Tiberius and his supporters, recognizing this, devoted considerable time and ingenuity to neutralizing all three.

The first victim of this process was Agrippa Postumus. Despite his adoption, he did not, on his tardy assumption of the *toga virilis*, a year or so later, receive those honours which had marked his two brothers out for the succession (Dio Cass. 55.22.4). Busy rumours had been spread by the opposition about his intractable, brutish character (Vell. Pat. 2.112, Dio Cass. 55.32, Tac. *Ann.* 1.3). In AD 5 or 6 he was banished to Surrentum (Sorrento) (Suet. *Div. Aug.* 65.1, Veil. Pat., *ibid.*), and in late AD 7, by senatorial decree, his place of exile was changed to the remote island of Planasia (Pianosa) near Elba (Suet. *Div. Aug.* 65.4, Tac. *Ann.* 1.3.6, Dio Cass. 55.32). His banishment was made permanent, he was placed under military guard, and his property became forfeit to the state treasury. In normal circumstances only the gravest of crimes could have justified such harsh treatment. Tacitus claims that Agrippa had committed no offence; if this is true, it indicates the skill of his enemies' propaganda. On the other hand (a point to bear in mind when considering Ovid's identical disclaimer), political activists regularly assert their technical innocence of *crimes*. Even if we concede Agrippa's guilt, Augustus might well be anxious, in those troubled times, to suppress evidence of conspiracy in high places. From now on, indeed, the Princeps habitually referred to Agrippa Postumus and the two Julias as his 'three boils' (Suet. *Div. Aug.* 65.4), and was in the habit of quoting Homer (*Il.* 3.40) to the

effect that he should never have married, and should have died without issue. When he said this it was, clearly, Scribonia and her offspring rather than Livia whom he had in mind. The anecdote offers a slight presumption of guilt on the trio's part, but *could* refer merely to their existential nuisance-value.

The following year (AD 8) saw the exile not only of Ovid (above, pp. 44ff.) but also of the younger Julia, to the island of Trimerus, off the Apulian coast, where, as an extra safeguard, she was made dependent for her subsistence on her grandmother Livia (Tac. *Ann.* 4.71). The ostensible reason for Julia's removal was, as in her mother's case, sexual promiscuity (Tac. *Ann.* 3.24, Suet. *Div. Aug.* 65.1.4), but the evidence is strikingly vague, and in all likelihood camouflaged a political offence or frame-up. Since Julia was convicted of *adultery* (Tac. *Ann.* 4.71) it follows, as Sir Ronald Syme reminds me, that her husband, L. Aemilius Paulus, was still living at the time. This is chronologically important, since Aemilius Paulus himself was said to have taken a leading part in a conspiracy against Augustus (Suet. *Div. Aug.* 19.1–2), in which Julia was clearly involved. The plot involved the release of both Agrippa Postumus and the elder Julia from their places of exile, and their subsequent presentation to the legions—in the hope, clearly, that Julia's popularity (Suet. *Div. Aug.* 65.3, Dio Cass. 55.13.1) would ensure her son's succession. The only possible date for this attempt (if it in fact took place) would thus be in 7/8 AD. At all events, Aemilius Paulus was executed (schol. Juv. 6.158) or banished (Syme, (2), pp. 210–11), and his wife exiled for life. On the other hand, her alleged lover, D. Junius Silanus (Tac. *Ann.* 3.24), was merely excluded from court circles, and in AD 20 returned to Rome with Tiberius' knowledge and consent. The contrast between his fate and that of the others is suggestive: more than ever it looks as though Julia's adultery was simply a cover for the charge (whether genuine or fabricated) of conspiracy and treason.

All this gives us some very clear pointers as to what Ovid's secret *error* may have been. His own apologia, and subsequent fate, tell us that he had incurred the implacable hostility of Livia and Tiberius; that if he looked anywhere for salvation after Augustus' death, it was to Germanicus. He had always been an ardent advocate, something striking in so apolitical a poet, of the Julian succession, writing fulsome tributes to Gaius Caesar, the grandson of the Princeps (AA 1.177ff., RA 155–6; even here he could not entirely restrain his *nequitia*, cf. p. 342). Later Christian tradition (Sidonius Apollinaris 23.157ff.) linked his name with that of the elder Julia. Though the notion that Julia was the model for Corinna sounds like mere clerical fantasizing, it is by no means implausible that the most fashionable elegiac poet in Rome should have moved on the fringes of Julia's

circle. Her scandalous conduct—whether sexual, political, or both—caused her father Augustus deep personal pain (Suet. *Div. Aug.* 65.2–3), and a similar reaction could well be expected from him to any further conspiracy in which she was involved. Though Ovid goes out of his way to emphasize that *he* had done nothing treasonable, that he had not himself conspired against Augustus (e.g. *Tr.* 2.51–2, 3.5.45–6), such disclaimers strongly suggest the guilty witness (*Tr.* 2.103–4, 3.5.49–50 etc.) anxious to minimize his involvement as an accessory after the fact. In particular, it is curious that he should specifically deny having been guilty of murder, either by knife or poison, or of forgery (*EP* 2.9.67–70), since one of Aemilius Paulus’ fellow-conspirators, Audasius, was charged—in what circumstances we do not know—with forgery, while an attempt on Augustus’ life, just as in 2 BC, formed part of the plot (Suet. *Div. Aug.* 19).

If Ovid saw or overheard, however innocently, preparations for a *coup* of this sort, then the hints he gives us make complete and immediate sense. ‘Great names’ were indeed involved. The insistence on official secrecy is more than understandable. Ovid’s unwillingness to go to the authorities sprang not only from fear, but also from a disinclination (which he could never afterwards acknowledge) to betray his Julian friends. The temptation to keep quiet and hope against hope for a successful outcome must have been immense. No thought of personal gain, indeed, but rather natural loyalty was involved: the situation governing the succession struggle was complex, and bred great evils (*Tr.* 4.4.38). What Ovid witnessed was indeed ‘deadly’ (*funestum*, *Tr.* 3.6.28): potentially to Augustus, in the event to Ovid himself. He had, very literally, been involved in a case of *lèse-majesté*; though he had taken no positive action (‘Thou shalt not kill; yet need’st not strive, officiously, to keep alive’), his silence was in itself culpable, and could, just as he admits, have earned him the death penalty. The hostile reaction of highly placed individuals (especially supporters of Tiberius), the deadly and unforgiving enmity of Livia and Tiberius themselves—these now make complete sense. Though Ovid’s constant snickering at the morals and dignity of the regime provided an extra incentive to those selecting his place of exile (above, p. 44), his prime function, ironically enough, was to provide convincing support for the cover-charges of sexual misconduct against the younger Julia—hence the public banning of the *Art of Love* a decade after its publication—and camouflage for the political realities that lay behind this salacious official version of events. The literary *praeceptor amoris* found himself, in the end, a political pawn.

Of all the many myths that have accumulated round Ovid, perhaps the most pernicious—and certainly the most persistent—is that of his straightforwardness, his lack of depth. He is, in fact, among the most complex, odd and elusive poets of antiquity. One of the most modern, too: Ovid's capacity to operate on multiple levels of awareness, his preoccupation with facets of identity and the divided self, both prefigure the emergence of a new psychological world. His seemingly simple verse draws us into a subtle labyrinth of ironic allusiveness; his mythical constructs reveal sociopolitical undertones; metamorphosis becomes a metaphor for the human condition, offering a bridge between the real world and that of the imagination. To what extent did Ovid's implied political attitudes penetrate his poetry? How far did his anti-Augustan temperament (cf. above, p. 47) colour those seemingly light-hearted pronouncements on love, war or the activities of prominent mythological figures, especially Jupiter? Above all, what is the relationship between the poet and his creative *persona*: between the historical Publius Ovidius Naso whose career we have just examined, and the witty, ironic womanizer, erotic *littérateur* and *praeceptor amoris* whom we meet in the *Amores* and the *Art of Love*? What congruity subsists between the thrice-married poet who rejected a senatorial career, and the literary hedonist, the heir to, and parodist of, an elegiac tradition going back to Callimachus?

The discussion of Ovid's *persona* has suffered badly from over-rigid schematization. The tradition which regarded Corinna as a 'real' character, and Ovid's erotic poetry as autobiographical in the fullest sense, provoked a critical reaction which held that Corinna was a fictitious creation, composed of the literary characteristics of mistresses in erotic poetry, set in traditional elegiac situations. According to this interpretation, not only Corinna but also the 'I' of the poems, the narrator, is a mask, a *persona*, sexual no less than political, which bears no necessary resemblance to Ovid the man. Ironically, proponents of this view support it with quotations from Ovid's own exilic apologia, composed to demonstrate, for the benefit of sceptical officialdom in Rome, his personal (as opposed to his literary) rectitude: 'My Muse is wanton, but my life is chaste' (*Tr.* 2.353–6). We are asked to choose between two convenient stereotypes: biographical character or fictional character, each in its tidy pigeon-hole. Both these attitudes strike me as misconceived; but due to an extremely influential antibiographical trend in modern literary criticism, which extends far beyond the field of classical studies, the question is too often treated as though it had been settled once and for all. This is very far from the case.

No one would, or should, deny that the *persona* as such exists, and plays a fundamental role in creative literature; but in recent years its

critical exploitation has been something less than discriminate. We should bear in mind that neither a pure biographical portrait nor a pure fictional portrait ever in reality occurs. Just as the supposedly imaginary character will always betray elements of actual persons—*ex nihilo nihil fit*—so a conscious effort at portraiture will always end up creating something subtly different and *sui generis*. Self-portraiture in poetry is a uniquely complex problem; but it is worth bearing in mind that when we do have adequate evidence with which to check the *persona* against the biographical facts—Yeats, Frost, Eliot, Pound, Sylvia Plath and Anne Sexton are instances that at once spring to mind—we find, despite the obvious and predictable differences, a far closer and more consistent nexus between the poet's life and the poetic *persona* than many modern critics care to assume. The same, arguably, will be true of Ovid. Person and *persona* are symbiotic: there can be no easy, schematic, rule-of-thumb distinction made between them.

Those who promote the 'persona theory' tend to apply it, without over-nice discrimination of genre or occasion, to most categories of literature. Yet it makes an immense difference whether the author is writing declared fiction (e.g. drama, epic, a novel, an imaginary epistle) or a type of literature where the author speaks, or pretends to speak, in his own identifiable person, such as journals, diaries, autobiographies, memoirs, personal letters, personal lyric or elegiac poetry, and first-person satire. This distinction is not always drawn by critics, and is strikingly absent in Ovid's case. Arguments for an Ovidian *persona* have always concentrated, significantly, on the erotic poems, though these are by no means the only, or even the likeliest, poems by Ovid in which such a *persona* can be inferred. I have yet to hear any critic reassuring us that when Ovid describes Daphne turning into a tree, or Arethusa into a fountain (*Met.* 1.547–55, 5.632–6), he is not actually drawing on personal experience. Nor, for obvious reasons, has it ever been suggested that the letters in the *Heroides* are autobiographical: what we have here is a kind of fiction akin to that which Richardson practised in *Pamela*, developed within a familiar mythological framework. On the other hand, it would be hard to argue that the poems of exile are *not* substantially autobiographical. We can discount some of the horrors as propaganda designed for home consumption but here the fictive *alter ego* is reduced to a minimum, the voice we hear is Ovid's own. Life has overtaken the poet's mythologies; history and art intersect amid the snows of the Dobruja.

Thus to isolate the creative *persona* in Ovid's works we need to consider each group of poems separately, and on its own merits. The degree of autobiographical involvement, whether direct or oblique, is

bound to vary a great deal. In some cases, e.g. the *Fasti*, it will be negligible. But the erotic poems are quite another matter. Here we have a substantial body of work which occupied Ovid's full time and energies from late adolescence until his early forties (see p. 40), the prime creative period of any poet's life. All of this poetry deals, in the most direct fashion, with sexual conquest, with erotic success or failure. If we discount the *Heroides* and the lost *Medea* (and even they offer thematic variations on the ever-interesting topic), Ovid's entire *œuvre* up to middle age embodies either what at least purports to be personal sexual experience, or advice based on such experience.

This leads to an interesting conclusion. Suppose we accept, for argument's sake, the proposition that the first-person lover or *praeceptor amoris* in these poems is a fictive projection quite distinct from Ovid himself. Suppose we further accept Ovid's own post-exilic assurance to Augustus (*Tr.* 2.349–58) that, while his verse may have been wanton (*iocosa*), his private life was irreproachable: then one inescapable inference presents itself. We have to do with an obsessional sexual fantasist, as resourceful (if not as vulgar) as Frank Harris, a creative writer whose entire erotic output depended on his imagination and what he had read in books. Even the argument (above, pp. 22ff.) that he drew much of his working material from his first marriage—thus, of course, vindicating his assertions of respectability in a hitherto unexpected way—runs directly counter to this concept of the erotic poems as a purely literary confection, a genre mish-mash combining Hellenistic motifs with imitation or parody of Ovid's predecessors (above all Propertius) in the Roman elegiac tradition.

Such a thesis is primarily sustained by lack of hard evidence. If we knew as much about Ovid's private life as we do, for instance, about Byron's, the odds are we would hear a good deal less about the 'Ovidian *persona*', and what we did hear would be better-balanced. Even on the literary side, the persistent belief in a subjective Hellenistic love-elegy, going back to Callimachus or Philetas, is mere wishful thinking on the part of scholars. No one would deny Ovid's bookishness. But is it inherently probable that he was the psychological forerunner of a writer such as Emily Brontë? His cheerfully pragmatic attitude to sex shows not a trace of that murky Gothic symbolism which always seems to hang about the parthenogenetic Heathcliffes of this world.

Put in such terms, the implausibility of Ovid's own protestations at once becomes apparent, and merely deepens when we recall how much of his early life, apart from two brief marriages, he spent as an unattached man-about-town (above, pp. 38ff.). Against this we have to balance all the familiar arguments advanced against any

identification of poet with *persona*: Ovid's irony and frivolity, his addiction to parody and literary allusion, his exploitation of myth, his wholesale purloining of erotic and other commonplaces from his elegiac predecessors, above all the chameleon switches of mood and personality he displays, his concern, at every level, with metamorphosis. A writer who depends so much on books, the argument runs, is likely to have purloined his mistress from other men's poems. A poet who can describe himself, by turns, as a faithful lover, a promiscuous Casanova, the world's greatest stud and an impotent neurotic, is merely composing five-finger exercises on literary themes—however these characteristics might, or might not, later substantiate his *soi-disant* role as Rome's most articulate instructor in seduction.

Such arguments remain largely unconvincing. The human psyche, as Whitman well knew, is more paradoxical and varied than these tidily logical apriorisms would suggest. Artists and poets, fantasists almost by definition, often with a remarkable capacity for living exclusively in the present, tend to display an endemic weakness for what might be termed 'instant convictions', especially in the areas of sex and politics. A mood is true, perhaps overwhelmingly so, today; tomorrow may, with equal sincerity, reverse it. A poem will probably result from each stage in this process, and the poet's narcissism will ensure that both are preserved for posterity. Which, if either, is posterity to label 'insincere'? Posterity, alas, can be extraordinarily obtuse. In *Amores* 2.7 and 2.8 Ovid first indignantly denies Corinna's charge that he has been carrying on with her maid, then switches about and asks the maid herself who can have given their affair away. A likely enough situation (if Corinna was based on Ovid's first wife, positively Mozartian); and half the secret fun, for Ovid, must have lain in knowing both sides of the story, writing little poems about them separately, one for each protagonist, and then publishing them together later, when enough time had passed for the entire incident to be nothing but an enjoyable joke, recollected with pleasure if not in tranquillity.

But for the commentator, whose life has run in duller channels, such conduct defies belief. Easier (and less worrying) to write the whole baffling performance off as rhetorical variations on a *topos*, projected by some *persona* not identifiable with the author. The poems then at once become 'pure literature', i.e. can be as irrational as you please without anyone getting upset over them. *We do but jest, poison i' jest: no offence i' the world*. This arbitrary dichotomy between poet and *persona* has obscured the critical issue as nothing else could have done, since Ovid, more than most creative artists, revels in literary masks: his obsession with metamorphosis is fundamental to his poetic

impulse. So long as the issue continues to be studied in simplistic terms, as a straight choice between ‘autobiography’ and ‘fiction’, it will remain insoluble—and no less unreal than the old battles between Unitarians and Separatists over the Homeric Question, which were similarly be-devilled by an artificial polarity of belief. In Ovid’s case we cannot begin to understand the literary *persona* until we accept the fact that it constantly embodies and exploits material from the poet’s life. If we discount his self-serving exilic propaganda from Tomis, explicitly designed to secure some mitigation of sentence (above, p. 47), it is a waste of time trying (for whatever motive) to present the *praeceptor amoris* as a respectable middle-class intellectual who, like Nabokov, just happened to have this purely literary obsession with the seamier side of sex.

Let us apply these findings to another pair of poems, which also, or so we are assured, cannot be reconciled with one another: *Amores* 1.3 and 2.4. In the first, Ovid swears eternal devotion to his girl of the moment (significantly unnamed): no sexual circus-rider he, he assures her. The second—largely ignored by Ovidians—offers about as categoric a profession of the Casanova creed as one could hope to find. The one proclaims fidelity, the other indefatigable concupiscence. *Ergo*, it is argued, either one or both must be a literary exercise. But why? The two moods frequently alternate (*experto credite*) in one person; and if that person happens to be a dedicated poet, why not exploit them both? Metamorphosis, in fact, is the name of the game, while Ovid’s loving version of the Narcissus myth (*Met.* 3.341ff.) hints at the second dominant strain in his make-up. He could, by turns and without effort, assume the roles, or masks (*personae*), of devoted lover, social butterfly, avuncular rake, cynical Don Juan, literary gossip and *praeceptor* (as a change from *desultor*) *amoris*. But such switches of mood offer no evidence whatsoever that Ovid’s erotic poems are purely literary fantasies. Equally invalid is the assumption that literary borrowings, if demonstrable, somehow *preclude* direct experience. Since Ovid’s views in *Amores* 2.4 had been, to some extent, anticipated by Propertius (e.g. at 2.22.1–18 and 2.25.41–5), must we therefore conclude that Ovid is here merely writing variations on a *topos*—as though he had no mind of his own, and as though sexual emotions were not the most widely shared, and perennial, impulses to bedevil the human heart?

XI

The character, the *persona*-projected-from-the-person that emerges from an overall reading of Ovid’s erode poems, is consistent, credible, and increasingly camouflaged, as time goes on, behind a protective

smokescreen of literary sophistication and cynical detachment. We have already seen (above, p. 24) some of the factors that may have contributed to this process. Indeed, Ovid charts his own development with what appears to be considerable candour. The appearance, of course, may be deceptive. To some extent he is almost certainly creating a kind of fictional poetic *Bildungsroman*: the question is, how far? The portrait projected is not only persuasive in itself but strikingly congruent, at every stage, with the known facts of his life. What we are shown, in essence, is the destruction of innocence, the forging of an Achilles' shield, bright and impenetrable, to protect over-sensitive emotions. Our first encounter with the poet of the *Amores* reveals an engaging enthusiast, in love with poetry, in love with love, dazzled by the senses, immensely creative and vulnerable. By the time we are through that carefully revised cycle, the narrator has plummeted to a nadir of despair and self-hatred: the world is not the glittering toy he thought it, human relations can hurt and perplex, disillusion has set in. It is at this point that Ovid creates his true *persona*, his protective carapace: the vulnerable lover's experiences become mere grist to the didactic mill of a new, untouchable protagonist, the *praeceptor amoris*, a brilliant, heartless, witty, articulate student of Roman manners and morals, the heterosexual Wilde or Coward of antiquity.

The mask, of course, is not quite consistent. In the *Art of Love*, flashes of kindness and human consideration from time to time break through that glittering façade. Yet from a very early point in his poetic career, Ovid's attitude to sex is presented as one of pure priapic functionalism (or, as in *Am.* 3.7, its antonym, impotence). Any feeling he may have retained for human relationships is carefully suppressed, and further distanced by a battery of recondite allusions. Here one suggestive modern parallel is Eliot's *Waste Land*, also the work of a bookish and allusive author, similarly given—perhaps, again, as a form of camouflage or self-protection—to literary quotation and parody. Could Ovid also claim 'These fragments have I shored against my ruins'? The release of new material since Eliot's death has shown that *The Waste Land* is deeply rooted in unhappy personal experience, an all-too-accurate reflection of the poet's psychological and sexual problems at the time when it was written. The *persona*, in both cases, is there, but symbiotic with the living face behind it. Cynicism and irony, too, can be defensive masks, as we see from the poems and stories of Dorothy Parker, who transmuted the raw material of a sensuous, desperately neurotic life into brittle and witty works of art.

The chief reason why Ovid *qua* eroticist can only be tolerated by so many people as a literary *farceur* is, I suspect, because he almost wholly lacked—or perhaps very early suppressed—the romantic instinct,

as his elegiac predecessors most certainly did not. Catullus and Propertius both had incendiary affairs with that highly modern figure, the *femme fatale*, whom they celebrated in burning verses; they understood, all too well, what Mario Praz has labelled the Romantic Agony, and counted all well lost for love. But in Ovid's mind the Romantic Agony was to be neutralized by irreverent laughter. Originally, we may surmise, for self-protective reasons, he seems to have treated all grand passions, political no less than erotic, as lacking in *urbanitas* if not positively vulgar. It did not take long for the pose to become habitual, to engender a coolly assured attitude to life. The ironic parodist in him turned Rome's governmental and marital clichés inside-out; the two interpenetrated to form a scathing in-depth appraisal of Augustan society (see above, p. 44). *Militat omnis amans*: the lover, in Ovid's scale of values, has no less tough a time, and deserves no less well of society, than the soldier or the statesman. Ovid is as indifferent to Roman middle-class values, seemingly, as to the glories of empire (it took exile to make him tone down both attitudes, and even then with a specific end in view); Augustus and his friends must have found such a poet, *ab initio*, not only frivolous but also subversive.

Today, of course, things have changed. Few critics now take exception to Ovid's alleged political attitudes, much less attribute them to a *persona*: not surprisingly, since they might have been custom-made to suit modern Western liberals. The notion of an authoritarian regime, sniped at by literary intellectuals who wrap up their message in myth and symbol, has a contemporary, and all too familiar, quality about it. Looked at in this way, Ovid at once becomes an acceptable figure in the anti-totalitarian resistance movement—a movement of which the later Roman heroes, and casualties, included Lucan, Seneca, Petronius and Juvenal. His withdrawal from a senatorial career in favour of poetry and sex (two notoriously private, if not anti-social, activities) can be construed as a deliberate rejection of Augustus' civic, moral and political ideals.

Yet though Ovid's politics may have become respectable nowadays, his public attitude to sex (whatever its more sensitive antecedents may have been) remains a perennial embarrassment: hence one strong motive (cf. above, pp. 59ff.) for assuming a distinct *persona* in the erotic poems. Above all in the *Art of Love*, but already to some extent in the *Amores*, we see a man to whom women are, fundamentally, *sexual objects*. This is not a universal Roman attitude: Propertius and Tibullus, to look no further, tell a very different story. It is significant how often, particularly in the *Art of Love*, Ovid refers to the object of his desire in the neuter: *quod ames*, he says, '*something* for you to love' (see, e.g., AA 1.91–2, 175, 263; other instances abound). Even the

word 'love', with its romantic connotations for modern ears, is subtly misleading. What Ovid has in mind throughout is not love (in the sense that Meredith or Erich Segal would understand it) but straightforward sexual seduction. The man's sole concern is to get the woman into bed, while the woman holds out for as many fringe benefits as she can collect before surrendering her one trump card: her elusiveness. *Do ut des*. Take away the high poetic finish, the sophisticated wit, the brilliant instinct for parody, and what remains, far less coarsely expressed, is, in essence, the attitude of Henry Miller as formulated in his *Tropic* novels or *The Rosy Crucifixion*: women as objects of pursuit, reduced to their ultimate vaginal function—or as mere grit in the poetic oyster, a stimulus to elicit immortal verse and, more important, immortal fame.

To borrow Ovid's own favourite image, what he offers, particularly in the *Art of Love*, is a guide to sexual siege-warfare and night-exercises (*Am.* 1.9, *AA* 2.233ff.). Pursuit, moreover (cf. p. 134), forms the essence and major attraction of the game. For Ovid a woman, to be attractive, must be hard to get: easy marks leave him cold. He spends nearly three books of the *Art of Love* telling men and women how to manoeuvre during the chase, and no more than a few perfunctory lines (*AA* 3.769–808) instructing them how to act when their quarry is safely bedded. Everyone, he assures us in a casual aside (*Am.* 1.5.25), knows about *that*. Like 'Walter', the author of that pathological casebook *My Secret Life* (which spells out, embarrassingly, just what the *Art of Love* would mean in practice), Ovid seems to have been obsessed by the idea and practice of seduction as an end in itself: we may speculate as to his original motives (above, p. 24), but the fact remains. His wiry physique, his natural abstemiousness, are only mentioned to demonstrate that he kept himself fit for the job.

How far, despite his much-vaunted psychological prowess, did he ever understand, or even really like, women as such? More, perhaps, than we might guess from the didactic poems alone, where his formulas for dealing with them almost all derive from popular, and perennial, masculine fantasies—on occasion, indeed, bearing an unfortunate resemblance to the kind of advice handed out in the editorial columns of *Playboy*. Even Bk 3 of the *Art of Love*, on the face of it designed to accommodate women, ends up by advising them to behave in ways that will please and flatter men. Yet against this one has to set the adolescent who declaimed in favour of passionate marital love (above, p. 21), the poet whose uxoriousness was in such striking contrast to the irregular bachelor lives of his literary contemporaries, who reveals so genuine a relationship with his third wife in his epistles from exile. The mask, as I have suggested, may

well have been protective camouflage for a too-vulnerable sensitivity, hurt at an impressionable age and determined never to be hurt again: the modern example of Somerset Maugham offers some suggestive parallels. This does not require us to believe Ovid *au pied de la lettre* when he asserts, in his apologia to Augustus from Tomis (*Tr.* 2.339–58), that his erotic poems are to be construed as mere fiction. Why should we trust such self-exculpation more than his equally firm assertion, written in happier days (*AA* 1.28–9), that ‘This work is based / On experience: what I write, believe me, I have practised’?

As should by now be clear, almost everything that Ovid wrote in exile was self-serving propaganda of a peculiarly desperate sort, its prime object being to pave the way for his reprieve (or at least some amelioration of his punishment) by refurbishing his tarnished moral credentials. In particular he was determined to separate himself, *qua* man and citizen, from that unfortunate *carmen* with which everyone identified his image. Hence his emphatic assertion (*AA* 1.31–4, 2.599–600, 3.483–4; cf. *EP* 3.3.51–2) that the women for whom he wrote the *Art of Love* were not freeborn married ladies but *demi-mondaines* and therefore fair game, an argument which I find, in all senses of the word, meretricious (cf. p. 73). Gordon Williams has argued, with some cogency (pp. 538–52), that not only Catullus, but also Tibullus and Propertius, cultivated mistresses who, far from being courtesans, or even freed women, were married Roman ladies of superior rank. This, he argues, was the elegiac convention that Ovid inherited, one not unlike that of the Provençal troubadours, with a lover undertaking to serve his married, and therefore enticingly unavailable, mistress. *

If this is true, and I think it is, then the *paraclausithyron* (see p. 274) and the whole concept of ‘enslavement to passion’ (*servitium amoris*) at once make excellent sense, which was not the case when scholars applied them to call-girls, since the latter are not paid (except in special pathological cases) to shut their clients out or otherwise treat them like dirt, and would hardly make a living if they did. But an upper-class married lady indulging herself in a little discreet adultery on the side is a quite different proposition, which at once eliminates all those puzzling social paradoxes in which Ovid’s erotic poems *prima facie* abound. Why should any Roman gentleman need a manual of *social* seduction techniques to crack the defences of women who, supposedly, (a) did not belong to his own class, and (b) were in any case virtually defined by their availability? Why all the elaborate but, on the face of it, quite irrelevant stage-props: presents and lady’s-maids, go-betweens and confidantes, hall-porters, secret messages and carefully planned assignations? When Ovid claims *not* to be writing for respectable (or not-so-respectable) married women, his protestations sound as conventional, and as hollow, as the novelist’s guarantee that

his characters are wholly imaginary and not based upon any living persons. With his motives for such a caveat we are brought back, sharply, to the political and social realities of Augustan Rome.

XII

Probably in 18 BC, Augustus passed the first stage of his legislation for social and moral reform, including the *Lex Iulia de maritandis ordinibus* and the *Lex Iulia de adulteriis coercedis*. The first aimed at encouraging larger families and discouraging obdurate bachelors, *inter alia* by restricting their right to accept legacies. It had proved unpopular with the landowning gentry, and Augustus had been compelled to accept substantial revisions to the original draft (Suet. *Div. Aug.* 34.1). Later, such resentment did it arouse, in particular among the equestrian order (Dio Cass. 56.10), that we find it jettisoned altogether (AD 9), and replaced by the far milder consular *Lex Papia Poppaea*. But it is the second—equally unpopular—law which most concerns us here. Its object was to stamp out adultery, in particular at senatorial or equestrian level, and to this end it embodied a series of positively draconian penalties for the guilty. Both parties were relegated to different islands for life, the paramour losing half his property, and the woman a third, as well as half her dowry. Such legislation, as Tacitus remarked (*Ann.* 3.24.2), was an affront to Roman tradition. It also divided free women into two categories, *matrones honestae*, with whom any sexual liaison was illegal, and those *in quas stuprum non committitur*, who were beyond contamination, i.e. prostitutes.

No ruler, let alone so canny a politician as Augustus, would impose these stringent punishments unless adultery had long since become the upper class's most popular diversion—which is exactly what we might guess from a first perusal of the Roman elegiac tradition. Further, since Ovid's *Art of Love* (which formalized several generations of classy fun-and-games into an erotic quadrille with its own sophisticated rules) had come out, to immense publicity, almost two decades after the *Lex Iulia de adulteriis coercendis* was first promulgated, it seems a fair assumption that this ordinance had been honoured, so to speak, more in the breach than the observance. Yet a general flouting of the law (as with comparable modern regulations concerning, say, homosexuality or marijuana) offered no protection against its enforcement. Once it was on the statute-book, however rarely it might be invoked, the whole existing convention of erotic elegy, with its married mistresses and titillating *servitium amoris*, became overnight an explosively dangerous commodity. Julia I's disgrace, politically motivated though that may have been, provided an all-too-graphic demonstration of what was at stake. Was it due to

bravado, *naïveté*, pro-Julian sentiment or pure accident that Ovid brought out his *Art of Love* right in the wake of that resounding scandal?

He had begun writing the *Amores* about 25 BC, in a freer atmosphere: attempts at moral legislation some three years earlier seem to have come to nothing, and the conventions developed by poets from Gallus to Propertius could still be exploited. Yet by the time the original five-book edition of the *Amores* appeared, probably in 16 or 15 BC (see p. 30), the *Lex Iulia de adulteriis coercendis* hung like a Sword of Damocles over the private lives and literary fashions of upper-class Rome. Ovid therefore camouflaged his views, but in an arrogantly perfunctory way; he certainly did not change them. Numerous poems in the *Amores*—even as revised—still present what are obviously married ladies of breeding engaged in adulterous pursuits (e.g. 1.4, 1.10, 2.2, 2.4, 2.7, 2.12, 3.2, 3.4, 3.14). The fiction of their status as freedwomen or courtesans is meant to impress no one except the authorities, like Ovid's claims (above, p. 70) about the audience for whom he allegedly composed the *Art of Love*. Like a child, he was playing with fire: life, and love, were a game of words to him; it is unlikely that he ever understood, till the blow fell, just how vulnerable a stance he had taken up. His pretences are perfunctory. Occasionally, too, the mask slipped. 'It's so provincial/To object to adulterous wives' he observes at one point (*Am.* 3.4.37–8). Don't stand on your marital rights, he adjures the husband: your wife's affairs will bring you presents and influential friends.

The long passage in the *Black Sea Letters* (*EP* 3.3.49–64) where Ovid yet again swears that he has steered clear of married women, and only written about, or for, freedwomen and *meretrices*, quite openly alludes to Augustus' 'stern law' on adultery and the hopelessness of his exile ever being rescinded if he is believed to have written a textbook for upper-class adulterers—'*vetiti si lege severalcredor adulterii composuisse notas*'. It was the *belief* that had to be dissipated: the truth was another matter. The eleventh commandment in such circles, Augustan or Edwardian, has always run: 'Thou shalt not be found out'—an attitude which Ovid hints at strongly elsewhere (*Tr.* 2.418), when he complains to the Princeps about writers who are free and successful despite having published erotic literature, and *not having kept quiet* about their sexual affairs, *concubitus not tacuere suos*. The operative word is *tacere*. If we assume, as I think we must, that Ovid's main preoccupation, when protesting his personal innocence in the pre-exilic poems, was to insure himself against the more unpleasant consequences of the Augustan adultery laws, then much that would otherwise remain contradictory at once falls into place. The mask, to this extent, was no literary device, but—in a highly

personal sense—self-protection. As we approach 1984, we should be able to recognize, and appreciate, his dilemma.

XIII

It is not possible, within the scope of this already overextended introduction, to give an adequate analysis of the many literary problems which Ovid's erotic poems present. That would require a separate monograph, which I hope in due course to write, and for which the problems already discussed, here and in the body of the notes, provide some sort of starting-point. The establishment of a firm biographical and literary chronology, the precise relationship of the poet himself, at each successive stage, to his creative *persona*—these form essential prolegomena to any useful evaluation of the poems. Many further topics then call for discussion: some are lightly touched on in the present work, others not treated at all (which should not be taken as evidence that I do not have them very much in mind). They include the evolution of Ovid's creative method between the *Amores* and the *Art of Love* (and, *a fortiori*, between the *Art of Love* and the *Metamorphoses*); the precise significance of those lengthy illustrative digressions (e.g. the story of Daedalus and Icarus, AA 2.21–96) with which the poet breaks up and enlivens his didactic precepts; his use of imitation and parody to exploit—and criticize—the elegiac tradition that he inherited; his oddly limited and repetitive imagery, mostly drawn from farming, sailing or the racecourse; his mythic parallels; his calculated ambiguities, often for the purpose of double entendre; his attitude to magic as, at its highest level, poetic metaphor (a recurrent preoccupation which goes back at least as far as Gorgias and Plato); his cool attitude to religion and philosophy, in particular the Epicureanism of Lucretius; above all, his complex structural patterns and thematic orchestration.

Structuralism, indeed, has become a kind of academic growth industry in Ovidian studies, with both good and bad results. It is by now a truism that both the Augustan elegists and the Hellenistic poets whose general literary tradition they inherited employed (as we might expect) various principles of formal book-arrangement when putting their collections together for publication, as well as similar internal principles for the articulation of longer works. The most common devices were (i) the use of *variatio*, i.e. the separation of poems with similar topics, addressees or (where appropriate) metres, (ii) the positioning of key poems at points of emphasis, in particular the beginning, middle or end of a book, with the central poem often acting as a pivot balancing the first and second half, and (iii) the deployment of poems in pairs or cycles.

Various scholars have applied these principles, with greater or lesser success, to Theocritus, Callimachus, Catullus, Virgil, Horace and, above all, to Tibullus, Propertius and Ovid. Their application offers a salutary reminder that pattern-spotting and pattern-making, as processes, too often lack any clear distinction from one another in the mind of the critic, with the result that, as Dryden said of translation, 'many a fair precept... is, like a seeming demonstration in the mathematics, very specious in the diagram, but failing in the mechanic operation.'

Since the setting up of structural models is an activity dangerously deficient (at least as far as literature is concerned) in external scientific controls, it is not to be wondered at that the theorists, like Gibbon's Byzantine heretics, contradict one another at every turn. The situation has been further complicated, in particular as regards the *Amores*, by a self-defeating tendency to look for numerical correspondences, either in line-groupings or individual poems. When such correspondences proved elusive, the temptation to juggle the three books into shape, by uniting or dividing poems, and thus producing a neat 15 + 20 + 15 pattern, was irresistible, but a shaky basis on which to construct further hypotheses. My own feeling is that while Ovid clearly planned the overall structure of the *Amores* in a general sense, attempts to pin him down to an over-rigid schematization are doomed *ab initio*.

The *Amores* as we have them (see p. 267) constitute a second, much-reduced edition of an original five-book publication. Ignoring the vexed question of how much, if anything, *Amores*² added to the canon, we can say with confidence that a great deal was jettisoned: the equivalent of two whole books. The criteria for the exclusion of these juvenilia need not have been exclusively literary. If my biographical reconstruction is valid, and the development of Ovid's literary *persona* was dictated at least in part by a need for emotional self-protection (above, pp. 22ff); if, in particular, Am. 3.5 can be taken as a youthful exercise surviving accidentally from *Amores*¹ rather than as non-Ovidian pastiche—then, it seems safe to assume, much that was excised from *Amores*² went out not only because it was prentice work in the literary sense, but because of its embarrassing candour. As the collection stands, Ovid moves in three books through the entire paradigm of direct sexual experience, from fancy-free *nequitia* to disillusionment and rejection, all counterpointed against a literary exploration of the elegiac mode, with Elegy herself personified (e.g. in 3.1) as an erotic tease. In each book key poems, literary or thematic, top and tail the collection, though central 'pivots' are harder to prove.

* It may be significant that Bk 1 shows most evidence of structural planning, and has, as a result, elicited a greater than usual degree of

consensus among structural critics. The inference could be that, because of its relatively upbeat mood, it suffered least from revision and suppression: that what Ovid was most concerned to excise were over-candid poems, in the Propertian manner, of *marital* heart-break and betrayal. *Am.* 3.5, the 'dream poem', would fit precisely into this category.

The *Art of Love* is an altogether different proposition, consisting of three (four including the *Cures*) long related poems on a common theme, which presumes a more tightly knit and consciously organized structure. I have made a detailed analysis of this structure, which I hope to publish elsewhere. A brief general survey must suffice here, for two reasons. First, full-scale structural investigations have no place in a book of this sort, though their findings may be of interest; and second, because of that lack of external control from which such analyses suffer, I do not flatter myself that the patterns I have extrapolated—against my own expectations and instincts—are necessarily any more cogent than their predecessors.

What I isolated was a series of thematic groupings, each internally subdivided, with no discernible numerical pattern, but relying heavily on balanced correspondences involving ring-composition and hysteron-proteron devices, and signposted by strategically placed metaphors and images, mythic *exempla* or personal statements. Thus (to begin at the beginning) Bk 1 for me consists of five major divisions: (A) Proem and Partitio (1–40): (B) Part One: Hunting Grounds for Women (41–252): (C) a central linking passage, with the coda to Part One (253–62) leading into the introduction to Part Two (263–8); (D) Part Two: Hunting Techniques (269–754): (E) Coda and Envoi (755–72). It should at once be clear that just as (A) and (E) balance one another, so do (B) and (D), while (C) functions as a double central pivot.

Within these major groupings I have detected others, internal to each individual section, but at the same time setting up counterpointed correspondences throughout the book as a whole. To take a particularly striking example, the first section of the proem (1–22), the introductory sections of (B) and (D) 41–66, 269–350), and the coda and envoi (755–72) are all organized in a hysteron-proteron pattern. Where P = personal statement, M = metaphorical illustration, and E = *exemplum* (mythic or otherwise), the following respective sequences occur: PMEPEMP; PMEMP; ME (M + E) EM; MEMEM. Similarly with the other books, where the main units of division (apart from proem and coda) are individual 'lessons', articulated with pivot and link sequences, I found the same internal thematic symmetries, the same external counterpointing between sections. Though I have not attempted a full analysis here, the reader

will find some discreet typographical signposting in the section-divisions of my translation of the *Art of Love*, which on occasion diverge from those commonly accepted by editors. Research in this area has a long way to go still; no conclusions—my own least of all—can be described as anything more than tentative.

XIV

Ovid has suffered, more than most Roman poets, from over-close association with the eighteenth century—an association which automatically guaranteed his depreciation during the Romantic revival, and from which he is only slowly recovering today. This relationship was given formal expression by the habit of translating his work into stopped rhyming couplets—a practice which obstinately survived even such hazards as the Ovidian habit of joking about Elegy's 'one lame foot' when referring to the pentameter. 'Let my verse rise with six stresses,' Ovid says, 'drop to five on the downbeat' (*Am.* 1.1.27): the traditional translator, presumably unable to count, with cheerful impartiality gives him five on both. Even in the *Metamorphoses* the use of rhymed couplets to express hexameters sets up associations wholly alien to the original movement of the verse; yet just such a version, that by A. E. Watts, came out as recently as 1954, to be reinforced by L. P. Wilkinson's illustrative extracts in *Ovid Recalled* a year later. It took the pioneering efforts of Guy Lee, whose version of the *Amores* (1968) remains a landmark in Ovidian studies, to break the tyranny of this singularly inappropriate medium; and even Lee did not face the simple fact that, however one sets about translating a Latin elegiac couplet, the first line, to achieve any sort of structural correspondence, has to be longer than the second.

The problem of the hexameter had already been tackled, with some success, by Day Lewis and Richmond Lattimore, who saw that the trouble with an English stress-equivalent to strict classical metre was that it lacked all counterpoint and tension: having neither fixed vowel-quantities nor (except in the most rudimentary sense) inflections, English could match neither the plangent and mosaic sonorities of Latin nor the flexible springiness of Greek on their own terms. On the other hand, there had to be some attempt to produce the *effect* of the original, since otherwise we would still be stuck with the tradition of 'local equivalence': blank verse, rhyming quatrains or other even less apposite English growths (for a full discussion of this problem see my *Essays in Antiquity*, London 1960, pp. 185ff.). Day Lewis and Lattimore went for the beat, the ictus, and let the metre take care of itself. They worked out a loose six-beat (occasionally five-beat) line, generally, though not always, with a feminine ending, that at least caught the

precipitate striding movement of the hexameter, while preserving its fundamental structure. It was the late Gilbert Highet—an excellent occasional verse-translator in addition to his other multiple talents—who first extended these ideas to the elegiac couplet in the extracts he used to illustrate *Poets in a Landscape* (1957), representing the pentameter by a variable short-stopped line with anything from five to two main stresses.

This, in essence, is the principle I have adopted for the present version of Ovid. It gives ample scope for rhythmic variety, something fundamental to all poetry based on stress, a compensation for the absence of those contrapuntal resonances only achievable in a language with the full resources of fixed-quantity metre at its disposal. While at least suggesting the highly formal (yet never boring) elegiac pattern that Ovid used to such subtle effect, it also gives great scope for changes of pace and emphasis, often through a casual enjambment that works more easily in English than it might in Latin. It is not the perfect solution—no translation can offer that—but at least (I flatter myself) it achieves some sort of workable compromise between the false associations of home-grown form and the impossible demands of alien metrics. The greatest pitfall, to be avoided at all costs, is the self-indulgent contemporary pastiche, dated almost before it is written. When I feel tempted, as I have at times done, to satisfy a weakness for loose historical parallels by translating Ovid's exilic poems in the manner of *Rock Drill* or the *Pisan Cantos*, I need only pick up Pound's own execrable version of Sophocles' *Women of Trachis*, and sanity rapidly returns. *Homage to Sextus Propertius* is another matter altogether, yet equally inapplicable: what we have here is not a translation, not even a 'metaphrase', but a poem in its own right.

It is now over forty years since I first read Ovid in Latin, and twenty since I first published a critical evaluation of him (see *Essays in Antiquity*, pp. 109–35). The present study has occupied my not over-generous leisure moments for more than a decade, and has steadily deepened my appreciation of Ovid's at times almost Empsonian complexities, the richness and variety of his poetic vision, his wit, his irony, his bubbling sense of fun, his elusive and delicate sensibilities, his changing moods and masks, his life-long love affair with the infinite subtleties of the Latin language. Much of what I wrote about him in 1960 I would still maintain: the supremacy of his early love-poetry and the exilic elegies, his ability to transcend the carapace of wit and fashion with which he protected himself, his failure fully to control an extended *magnum opus* (apparent even in the *Cures for Love*, let alone in the *Metamorphoses*). On the other hand I have, I hope, come to a better appreciation of the deep problems inherent in his creative *persona*, and the relationship of that *persona* to his public and

private life. I have lived with him now for many years: admiration has deepened into affection, and as I write these words I feel I am offering a tribute to some old and dear personal friend. If I can, in my translation, convey even a fraction of the continuing pleasure and enlightenment Ovid has brought into my life, then all my labours will have been well worth while.

Athens–Methymna–Los Angeles–Austin
1969–81

THE POEMS

THE AMORES

Epigram by the Poet

We are our author's book. Before, we comprised five sections,

Now we're cut down to three. The decision was his.

You still may derive no pleasure from reading us—but
remember,

With two of us gone, your labour is that much less.

BOOK 1

1

Arms, warfare, violence—I was winding up to produce a

Regular epic, with verse-form to match –

Hexameters, naturally. But Cupid (they say) with a snicker

Lopped off one foot from each alternate line.

‘Nasty young brat,’ I told him, ‘who made *you* Inspector

of

5 Metres?

We poets come under the Muses, we’re not in your mob.

What if Venus took over the weapons of blonde Minerva,

While blonde Minerva began fanning passion’s flame?

Who’d stand for Our Lady of Wheatfields looking after rides
and forests?

10 Who’d trust the Virgin Huntress to safeguard crops?

Imagine long-haired Apollo on parade with a pikestaff

While the War-God fumbled tunes from Apollo’s lyre!

Look, boy, you’ve got your own empire, and a sight too much
influence

As it is. Don’t get ambitious, quit playing for more.

15 Or is your fief universal? Is Helicon yours? Can’t even

Apollo call his lyre his own these days?

I’d got off to a flying start, clean paper, one magnificent

Opening line. Number two brought me down

With a bump. I haven’t the theme to suit your frivolous metre:

20 No boyfriend, no girl with a mane of coiffured hair –’

When I’d got so far, presto, he opened his quiver, selected

An arrow to lay me low,

Then bent the springy bow in a crescent against his knee, and

Let fly. ‘Hey, poet!’ he called, ‘you want a theme? Take
that!’

25 His shafts—worse luck for me—never miss their target:

I'm on fire now, Love owns the freehold of my heart.

So let my verse rise with six stresses, drop to five on the
downbeat –

Goodbye to martial epic, and epic metre too!

Come on then, my Muse, bind your blonde hair with a wreath
of

30 Sea-myrtle, and lead me off in the six-five groove!

2

What's wrong with me nowadays, how explain why my
mattress

Feels so hard, and the bedclothes will *never* stay in
place?

Why am I kept awake all night by insomnia, thrashing around
till

Every weary bone in my body aches?

5 If Love were my assailant, surely I'd know it—unless he's

Craftily gone under cover, slipped past my guard?

Yes, that must be it: heart skewered / by shafts of desire, the
raging

Beast, passion, out at prowl in my breast.

Shall I give in? To resist might just bank up the furnace –

10 All right, I give in. A well-squared load lies light.

Flourish a torch, it burns fiercer. I know, I've seen it. Stop the

Motion, and pouf! it's out.

Yoke-shy rebellious oxen collect more blows and curses

Than a team that's inured to the plough.

15 Your restive horse earns a wolf-curb, his mouth's all bruises;

A harness-broken nag scarcely feels the reins.

It's the same with Love. Play stubborn, you get a far more
thorough

Going-over than those who admit they're hooked.

So I'm coming clean, Cupid: here I am, your latest victim,

20 Hands raised in surrender. Do what you like with me.

No need for military action. I want terms, an armistice –

You wouldn't look good defeating an unarmed foe.

Put on a wreath of myrtle, yoke up your mother's pigeons –

Your stepfather himself will lend you a fine

25 Chariot: mount it, drive in triumph through the cheering

Rabble, skilfully whipping your birds ahead,

With your train of prisoners behind you, besotted youths and
maidens,

Such pomp, such magnificence, your very own

Triumph: and I'll be there too, fresh-wounded, your latest

30 Prisoner–displaying my captive mind –

With Conscience, hands bound behind her, and Modesty, and
all Love's

Other enemies, whipped into line.

You'll have them all scared cold, while the populace goes
crazy,

Waves to its conquering hero, splits its lungs.

35 And what an escort–the Blandishment Corps, the Illusion

And Passion Brigade, your regular bodyguard:

These are the troops you employ to conquer men and
immortals –

Without them, why, you're nothing, a snail unshelled.

How proudly your mother will applaud your triumphal
progress

40 From high Olympus, shower roses on your head;

Wings bright-bejewelled, jewels starring your hair, you'll

Ride in a car of gold, all gold yourself.

What's more, if I know you, even on this occasion

You'll burn the crowd up, break hearts galore all round:

45 With the best will in the world, dear, you can't keep your
arrows idle –

They're so hot, they scorch the crowd as you go by.

Your procession will match that of Bacchus, after he'd won the

Ganges

Basin (though *he* was drawn by tigers, not birds).

So then, since I am doomed to be part of your-*sacré* triumph,

50 Why waste victorious troops on me now?

Take a hint from the campaign record of your cousin,

Augustus

Caesar-*his* conquests became protectorates.

3

Fair's fair now, Venus. This girl's got me hooked. All I'm asking from her

Is love-or at least some future hope for my own

Eternal devotion. No, even that's too much-hell, just let me love her!

(*Listen*, Venus: I've asked you so often now.)

5 Say yes, pet. I'd be your slave for years, for a lifetime.

Say yes-unswerving fidelity's my strong suit.

I may not have top-drawer connections, I can't produce blue-blooded

Ancestors to impress you, my father's plain middle-class,

And there aren't any squads of ploughmen to deal with *my* broad acres -

10 My parents are both pretty thrifty, and need to be.

What *have* I got on my side, then? Poetic genius, sweetheart,

Divine inspiration. And love. I'm yours to command -

Unswerving faithfulness, morals above suspicion,

Naked simplicity, a born-to-the-purple blush.

15 I don't chase thousands of girls, I'm no sexual circus-rider;

Honestly, all I want is to look after you

Till death do us part, have the two of us living together

All my time, and know you'll cry for me when I'm gone.

Besides, when you give me yourself, what you'll be providing

20 Is creative material. My art will rise to the theme

And immortalize *you*. Look, why do you think we remember
The swan-upping of Leda, or Io's life as a cow,
Or poor virgin Europa whisked off overseas, clutching
That so-called bull by the-horn? Through poems, of
course.

25 So you and I, love, will enjoy the same world-wide publicity,
And our names will be linked, for ever, with the gods.

4

'So your man's going to be present at this dinner-party?
I hope he drops down dead before the dessert!

Does this mean no hands, just eyes (any chance guest's
privilege) –

Just to *look* at my darling, while *he*

5 Lies there with you beside him, in licensed embracement
And paws your bosom or neck as he feels inclined?
I'm no longer surprised at those Centaurs for horsing around
over

Some cute little filly when they were full of wine –

I may not live in the forest, or be semi-equipped as a stallion,

10 But still *I* can hardly keep my hands to myself
When you're around. Now listen, I've got some instructions for
you,

And don't let the first breeze blow them out of your
head!

Arrive before your escort. I don't see what can be managed

If you do—but anyway, get there first.

15 When he pats the couch, put on your Respectable Wife
expression,

And take your place beside him—but nudge my foot

As you're passing by. Watch out for my nods and eye-talk,

Pick up my stealthy messages, send replies.

I shall speak whole silent volumes with one raised eyebrow,

20 Words will spring from my fingers, words traced in wine.

When you're thinking about the last time we made love together,

Touch your rosy cheek with one elegant thumb.

If you're cross with me, and can't say so, then pinch the bottom

Of your earlobe. But when I do or say

25 Something that gives you especial pleasure, my darling,
Keep turning the ring on your finger to and fro.

When you yearn for your man to suffer some well-merited misfortune

Place your hands on the table as though in prayer.

If he mixes wine specially for you, watch out, make him drink it

30 Himself. Ask the waiter for what *you* want
As you hand back the goblet. I'll be the first to seize it
And drink from the place your lips have touched.

If *he* offers you tit-bits out of some dish he's tasted,

Refuse what's been near his mouth.

35 Don't let him put his arms round your neck, and oh, don't lay that

Darling head of yours on *his* coarse breast.

Don't let his fingers roam down your dress to touch up

Those responsive nipples. Above all, don't you dare

Kiss him, not once. If you do, I'll proclaim myself your lover,

40 Lay hand upon you, claim those kisses as mine.

So much for what I can see. But there's plenty goes on under

A long evening wrap. The mere thought worries me stiff.

Don't start rubbing your thigh against his, don't go playing

Footsy under the table, keep smooth from rough.'

45 (I'm scared all right, and no wonder—I've been too successful

An operator myself, it's my own

Example I find so unnerving. I've often petted to climax

With my darling at a party, hand hidden under her
cloak –)

‘– Well, *you* won’t do *that*. But still, to avoid the least
suspicion,

50 Remove such natural protection when you sit down.
Keep pressing fresh drinks—but no kisses—on your husband,
Slip neat wine in his glass if you get the chance.
If he passes out comfortably, drowned in sleep and liquor,
We must improvise as occasion dictates.

55 When we all (you too) get up and leave, remember
To stick in the middle of the crowd –
That’s where you’ll find me, or I you: whenever
There’s a chance to touch me, please do!’
(Yet the most I can win myself is a few hours’ respite:

60 At nightfall my mistress and I must part.)
‘At nightfall he’ll lock you inside, and I’ll be left weeping
On that cold front doorstep—the nearest I can come
To your longed-for embraces, while *he’s* enjoying, under
licence,
The kisses, and more, that you give me on the sly.

65 What you *can* do is show unwilling, behave as though you’re
frigid,
Begrudge him endearments, make sex a dead loss.’
(Grant my prayer, Venus. Don’t let either of them get pleasure
Out of the act—and *certainly not her!*)

‘But whatever the outcome tonight, when you see me
tomorrow

70 Just swear, through thick and thin, that you told him No.’

5

A hot afternoon: siesta-time. Exhausted,
I lay sprawled across my bed.
One window-shutter was closed, the other stood half-open,
And the light came sifting through

5 As it does in a wood. It recalled that crepuscular glow at
sunset

Or the trembling moment between darkness and dawn,
Just right for a modest girl whose delicate bashfulness

Needs some camouflage. And then –

In stole Corinna, long hair tumbled about her

10 Soft white throat, a rustle of summer skirts,

Like some fabulous Eastern queen *en route* to her bridal-
chamber –

Or a top-line city call-girl, out on the job.

I tore the dress off her—not that it really hid much,

But all the same she struggled to keep it on:

15 Yet her efforts were unconvincing, she seemed half-hearted –

Inner self-betrayal made her give up.

When at last she stood naked before me, not a stitch of
clothing,

I couldn't fault her body at any point.

Smooth shoulders, delectable arms (I saw, I touched them),

20 Nipples inviting caresses, the flat

Belly outlined beneath that flawless bosom,

Exquisite curve of a hip, firm youthful thighs.

But why catalogue details? Nothing came short of perfection,

And I clasped her naked body close to mine.

25 Fill in the rest for yourselves! Tired at last, we lay sleeping.

May my siestas often turn out that way!

6

It's a dog's life for you, porter, chained to the wall. You're
entitled

To something better. Come on now, let's hear that door

Creak open, sweet music of rusty hinges. I'm not demanding

Any outsize favour. Just give me a wide enough crack

5 To squeeze through sideways. Love's melted off my poundage,

I'm a shadow, a skeleton. One inch—or two—is enough.

Love will teach you to creep undetected past watchful sentries,

He'll never let you put a foot wrong.

I used to be scared of the dark and its empty phantoms,

10 Was amazed by anyone who went out at night.

Then came a snicker of laughter—quite audible—from Cupid

And his sexy mother. 'You too can be brave,' they said,

And presto! I was in love. Nowadays neither flitting ghosts nor

Murderous footpads cause me the slightest qualms.

15 It's just *you* I fear. You're stubborn. You alone need my flattery;

You hold the bolt that could finish me off.

Just look at this doorpost, all wet with my tears. (If you want
a

Really good view of it, why not undo the bars?)

When you were stripped for that flogging, and all ashiver,

20 Didn't I get your mistress to let you off?

Have you the gall to suggest that the favour I once showed
you

Can be paid with any lesser service in return?

One good turn merits another. Here's your chance to get what
you're after –

The night is passing: slide that doorbolt free!

25 Just slide it—I tell you, you'll win reprieve from your long
bondage,

Goodbye to the endless bread and water of servitude! –

No good. You're a hard case, porter. All my entreaties

Fall on deaf ears. The door stays barred. Such tough

Oak-battened defences are fine when a city lies under

30 Siege—but where's the invader now,

In peacetime? Shut out a lover, what's left for your enemies?

The night is passing: slide that doorbolt free.

No army marches behind me, I'm innocent of weapons –

If it weren't for that incubus Love

35 I'd be on my own. But *he* can never be got rid of:

Simpler, for me, to tear body and soul apart.

One poet, then, mildly fuddled, with Love as escort

And a cock-eyed wreath set askew

On his sticky-damp hair. Who'd shrink from such an attacker?

40 *The night is passing: slide that doorbolt free.*

Still obstinate? Or asleep? God damn you, have my entreaties

Been wasted on empty air?

Yet, as I recall, when first I tried to slip past you,

You stayed awake till all hours

45 Watching the stars wheel round. Got a girl in your cubbyhole?

If so, you're one up on me.

Only give me the same chance—I'd take on your shackles.

The night is passing: slide that doorbolt free.

Listen—didn't I catch the creak of hinges, the labouring

50 Scritch of an opened door? –

No such luck. Just a random gust, rattling the woodwork,

Blowing my hopes sky-high.

Boreas, flame of a north wind, remember your air-raped

Bride, come thunder these deaf posts down for me!

55 Silence throughout the city: damp with bright dewfall.

The night is passing: slide that doorbolt free.

I've a sword and a torch, I'm ready to storm this standoffish

Mansion by frontal assault –

Darkness, desire and drink don't make for moderation,

60 Night removes self-restraint; the others, fear.

I've exhausted my repertoire. Neither threats nor entreaties

Can shift you. You're tougher than the door itself.

Guarding pretty girls isn't your forte. Man, you'd do better

As a warder in some top-security gaol.

65 [Already the morning star's at its frosty zenith, and cockcrow
Shatters poor workers' dreams.]
I'm not exactly happy. Well, I'll take off this garland
And leave it lying right on the front step.
Come morning, my mistress will find it there, mute witness
70 To this wasted vigil of mine.
I'd better be off now. You stuck to it. Duty is duty,
No Lovers Admitted. So, goodbye,
You and your door, slaves both. For unfeeling toughness
You're just about evenly matched.

7

Any friend of mine here? Then tie up my hands (proper
shackles
Are what they deserve) until
This frenzy has blown itself out. I went mad, I assaulted
My mistress. The poor girl's hurt, and in tears.
5 My rage was such, though, I could have beat up my own
parents,
Horsewhipped the blessed gods.
Well, there *are* precedents—like sevenfold-shielded Ajax
When he ran amok through the meadows, slaughtering
sheep,
Or Orestes the mother-killer, sick instrument of paternal
10 Vengeance, all ready to knock off
His pursuing Furies. What I did (no excuses!) was mess up
Her new coiffure. Like that, in disarray,
It looked splendidly windswept. Oh, her beauty—like Atalanta's
(I suppose) while hunting game on the Arcadian hills,
15 Or Ariadne's, all tears as the cruel sirocco lifted
Theseus, ship and promises, out of her life; –
And what price Cassandra, about to be raped, in chaste
Athena's
Shrine, on her knees? But she was a priestess, so

a

Wore her hair in a snood. Unanimous verdict: I'd been a brute,

20 Madman. Only she said nothing. She was too scared.

Yet her silent, frozen expression still condemned me, her
speechless

Tears proclaimed my guilt.

I'd sooner have had my arms fall from their sockets—easier

To forego a part of myself. I found

25 A madman's strength—but it turned to my disadvantage,

My toughness did me no good.

Hands, agents of crime and violence, I disown you!

Clap on the gyves. The charge is sacrilege.

If I beat up Rome's lowest bum, *and he was a citizen*,

30 I'd be for it. Have I any more right to hit my girl?

Well, Diomedes started it. He set me a bad example –

First man to strike a goddess. I came next.

Yet Diomedes proved less culpable. *His* fury was expended

On an enemy. *I* hurt the girl I said I loved.

35 Come on now, conquering hero, enjoy your magnificent

Triumph, wear laurel, give thanks to the gods –

And hark to the crowd, as it surges behind your chariot,
calling

'Up the brave boyo who defeated—a girl!'

She'll walk ahead, poor sweet, hair all dishevelled, dead-white

40 Except for the scratches on her cheeks –

My one and only captive. Bruised lips, bites around neck and
shoulders

Would have made more appropriate scars.

Last point: if I *had* to boil over like some furious torrent,

Transported with sheer rage,

45 Couldn't I just have scared her by shouting, bawled her

Out in fine style, made threats—but have known

When to stop? I could have ripped down her dress from neck

to waistline –

The belt would have stopped me there.

Instead, I grabbed the hair off her forehead, tore at those
ladylike

50 Cheeks with my nails. I admit it. I was a brute.

She stood there, bewildered. Her face had gone pale and
bloodless

As new-sawn marble, I watched

The numbness grip her, a shudder run through her body

Like a breeze in the poplar-leaves,

55 Or rippling across a reedbed, or ruffling catspaws

Sketched on the skin of the sea.

Tears brimmed in her eyes, spilled over at last, descended

Like drops from melting snow.

It was then that I first began to feel the enormity

60 Of what I had done. Those tears she shed were my blood.

Three times I tried to kneel before her in supplication

And clasp her feet. Three times

She thrust off those nightmare hands. Don't hesitate, darling,

Scratch my face back. Revenge

65 Will lessen the agony. Eyes, hair, have your will of them:

Anger lends strength to a weak hand.

Or else at least remove the signs of my misdemeanour –

Just rearrange your hair as it was before!

8

There's a certain–well: any reader in need of a procuress?
Listen,

Try Dipsas. A certain bitch, snake, hag.

Dipsas, dipso, well-named. If *she* ever saw pink horses

At sunrise, they weren't the Dawn's.

5 She's a witch, mutters magical cantrips, can make rivers

Run uphill, knows the best aphrodisiacs –

When to use herbal brews, or the whirring bullroarer,

How to extract that stuff from a mare in heat.

She can control the weather, make a day overcast with

10 Cloud at will, or brilliant and clear;

I've known times (believe it or not) when the moon turned
bloody,

And blood dripped from the stars.

It wouldn't surprise me if the old bitch grew feathers at
nightfall

And went flapping round like an owl –

15 I've heard rumours, it's possible. What's more, she's got
double

Pupils, a twin light glinting from each eye.

She conjures up long-dead souls from their crumbling
sepulchres

And has incantations to split the solid earth.

Well: this old hag undertook to suborn *our* relationship,

20 And a glibly poisonous tongue she had for the job.

By pure chance I overheard her. The big double doors stood
open.

Here, then, is what she said: 'You know,

Dearie, you made a great hit with that rich young gentleman

Yesterday. He'd got eyes for nobody else –

25 And why should he have? There's no girl more beautiful. Such
a pity

Your turn-out doesn't match your face.

I'd like to see you become as wealthy as you're good-looking –

Once get you in the money, I shan't ever starve.

The stars were against you, dearie, Mars stood in opposition,

30 But now Mars has wheeled off, and today

Venus is in the ascendant. Look how her rising favours

Your lot: a rich suitor, and anxious to oblige!

Dead handsome, too, just about as pretty as you are—if he

wasn't

Bidding himself, why, people would bid for *him*.

35 Ah, that got a blush! Pale faces need colour, but Nature's
method

Is so unpredictable. Safer to stick to Art.

Keep your eyes on your lap. Look demure, scale your
responses

To the size of each lover's gifts.

In the old days it was different. Those Sabine women stuck to

40 One husband apiece. But then *they* didn't wash.

Today Mars is so taken up with foreign campaigning

That Venus has made a clean sweep of Rome,

Her own Aeneas' city. Pretty girls have a ball. No virgins

Except the unasked—and a smart kid asks for herself.

45 Prissy-faced women are worth close scrutiny: you'll discover

A frown can hide a multitude of sins.

Bending that bow made trial of Penelope's young wooers,

A good stiff horn proved too much for them.

Volatile time slips past us without our knowledge

50 Like a swift-gliding river. Brass shines

With constant usage, a beautiful dress needs wearing,

Leave a house empty, it rots.

Lack of exercise withers your beauty, you need to take lovers

—

And the treatment calls for more than one or two.

55 Run a string, take your pick. It's safer, less troublesome:

Wolves that raid flocks eat best.

That poet of yours, now, what does he give you, except his
latest

Verses? Find the right lover, you'd scoop the pool.

Why isn't he richer? The patron god of poets

60 Wears gold, plays a gilded lyre.

Look, dear, stop worshipping genius, try generosity

Just for a change. To give is a fine art.

And don't you look down your nose at some slave who's
purchased

His freedom. Chalked feet are no crime.

65 Don't let yourself be fooled by ancestral portraits. Your lover's
Broke? Then give him the boot, and his pedigree too.

When he asks for a night on the house because he's so
handsome

Tell him No. His boyfriend can foot the bill.

While you're spreading your net, go easy. Don't show too
rapacious

70 Or your bird may fly off. Once you've caught him, anything
goes.

Some show of love does no harm: let him fancy himself your
darling,

But take good care you collect a *quid pro quo*.

Don't say Yes every night. Pretend that you have a headache,

Or make Isis your excuse, then you can plead

75 Religious abstention. Enough's enough, though—he may get
accustomed

To going without, over-frequent rebuffs may cool
His passion off. Take gifts, but be deaf to entreaties –

Let the lucky man hear his rival cursing outside.

You've hurt him? *He* started it. Throw a quick tantrum. This
kind of

80 Counter-attack will very soon choke him off.

But never stay angry too long. A festering quarrel

Can make permanent enemies.

Another trick you must learn is control of the tear-ducts,

How to weep buckets at will –

85 And when you're deceiving someone, don't let perjury scare
you:

Venus ensures that her fellow-gods

Turn a deaf ear to such gambits. You must get yourself a

houseboy

And a well-trained maid, who can hint

What gifts will be welcome. Don't let them demand exorbitant

90 Tips for themselves. Little presents soon add up.

Your sister and mother, your nurse, these can all help fleece a
lover –

Many hands make quick loot.

When you've run through all other excuses for getting presents

Say it's your birthday, show him the cake.

95 Don't let him get cocksure, without any rivals:

Love minus competition never wears well.

Leave the bed suspiciously rumpled, make sure he sees it,

Flaunt a few sexy bruises on your neck –

Above all, show him his rival's presents (if none are
forthcoming

100 Order some yourself, from a good shop).

When you've dug enough gold, then protest he's being far too
generous

And ask him for a *loan*—which you'll never repay.

Beguile with sweet words, and blandish while you despoil
him:

A taste of honey will mask the nastiest dose.

105 These tactics are guaranteed by a lifetime's experience,

So don't ignore them. Follow my advice.

And you'll never regret it. Ah, many's the time you'll bless me

While I'm alive, and pray that my old bones

Lie easy after I'm gone –'

At this point my shadow

110 Betrayed me. I was dying to get my hands

On those sparse white locks, to tear at the old hag's raddled

Cheeks and drink-bleary eyes.

May the gods strip the roof from her head, end her days in

poverty,

Send her horrible winters and an eternal thirst!

9

Every lover's on active service, my friend, active service,
believe me,

And Cupid has his headquarters in the field.

Fighting and love-making belong to the same age-group –

In bed as in war, old men are out of place.

5 A commander looks to his troops for gallant conduct,

A mistress expects no less.

Soldier and lover both keep night-long vigil,

Lying rough outside their captain's (or lady's) door.

The military life brings long route-marches—but just let his
mistress

10 Be somewhere ahead, and the lover too

Will trudge on for ever, scale mountains, ford swollen rivers,

Thrust his way through deep snow.

Come embarkation-time *he* won't talk of 'strong north-easters',

Or say it's 'too late in the season' to put to sea.

15 Who but a soldier or lover would put up with freezing

Nights—rain, snow, sleet? The first

Goes out on patrol to observe the enemy's movements,

The other watches his rival, an equal foe.

A soldier lays siege to cities, a lover to girls' houses,

20 The one assaults city gates, the other front doors.

Night attacks are a great thing. Catch your opponents sleeping

And unarmed. Just slaughter them where they lie.

That's how the Greeks dealt with Rhesus and his wild
Thracians

While rustling those famous mares.

25 Lovers, too, will take advantage of slumber (her husband's),

Strike home while the enemy sleeps: getting past

Night patrols and eluding sentries are games both soldiers

And lovers need to learn.

Love, like war, is a toss-up. The defeated can recover,

30 While some you might think invincible collapse;

So if you've got love written off as an easy option

You'd better think twice. Love calls

For guts and initiative. Great Achilles sulks for Briseis –

Quick, Trojans, smash through the Argive wall!

35 Hector went into battle from Andromache's embraces

Helmeted by his wife.

Agamemnon himself, the Supremo, was struck into raptures

At the sight of Cassandra's tumbled hair;

Even Mars was caught on the job, felt the blacksmith's meshes

–
40 Heaven's best scandal in years. Then take

My own case. I was idle, born to leisure *en déshabillé*,

Mind softened by lazy scribbling in the shade.

But love for a pretty girl soon drove the sluggard

To action, made him join up.

45 And just look at me now—fighting fit, dead keen on night
exercises:

If you want a cure for slackness, fall in love!

10

I had all the parallels for you. You were my Helen, Troy-
bound

From Sparta, the cause of war

Between first and second husbands. You were Leda, conned
and swanned by

That adulterous god on the make

5 In his birdsuit of white plumage. You were Amymone

Plodding through dusty fields

With a waterpot on her head. I got nervous at bulls and
eagles,

Trying to figure what shape Zeus might take for sex
When it could be *your* turn next. But now I don't care any
longer,

10 I've come to my senses, your profile leaves me cold.
Why am I different? you ask. I'll tell you. *Because you keep
nagging*

For presents. That's what turns me off.

At first you were guileless. Then I loved you, soul and body –

But now this inner flaw's eclipsed your looks.

15 Love is a child, and naked. Childhood spells innocence;

Nakedness, open ways. Why invite

This son of Venus to sell himself? He's got no pocket

In which he can stash away his gains.

Neither mother nor son are military experts–soldiers'

20 Pay, my dear, is not for Unwarlike gods.

Even the prostitute, screwing a wretched livelihood out of

Her body, game for any man with the cash,

Still curses her grasping bully. She's *forced* to hustle –

You have a free choice.

25 Consider the beasts of the field. Too bad if unreasoning

Brutes turn out kinder than you!

Do mares demand gifts from their stallions? Do cows solicit

Their bulls? Must a ram

Court ewes with offerings? Only a woman glories

30 In fleecing her males. She alone

Rents out her nights, is up for bids, plays the seller's market,

Lets her pleasure adjust the price.

When sex gives equal enjoyment to both partners

Why should *she* sell it, *he* pay?

35 If a man and a woman perform the same act together, is it

Fair for you to profit by it, while I lose?

It's disgraceful for witnesses to sell false testimony,

Disgraceful for jurymen to pocket bribes;
 When defending counsel is bought, that's a crying scandal,
 40 Like a corruptly wealthy Bench.
 It's scandalous to cash in on the proceeds of fornication
 Or prostitute your looks for gain.
 Such services, freely given, deserve our thanks, but whenever
 You put out for cash, we're quits –
 45 One payment finally discharges all obligations,
 The debts of common kindness are written off.
 You beauties should think twice before putting a price-tag
 On bedroom amusements. Highly unpleasant results
 Can ensue from such sordid traffic. The Vestal Tarpeia
 50 Bargained for Sabine armlets, but was crushed
 Under Sabine arms. Eriphyle betrayed her husband
 For a necklace—and got
 Her son's sword straight through her vitals. Still, there's no
 objection
 To dunning the rich for gifts –
 55 *They* can afford such demands. Pick your grapes from the most
 prolific
 Vineyard, and if it's apples you want, then try
 Alcinous' orchard. Let courtesy, trust, devotion
 Be the poor man's tribute. From each
 Lover his all—but according to his resources. *My* gift
 60 Is poetry, the praise
 Of beautiful girls. I can make them immortal. Fine dresses,
 Jewellery, gold, all perish. But the fame
 Bestowed by my verse is perennial. I'm not ungenerous, it's
 being
 Asked I detest. Quit wanting, and I'll give.

Unruly hair, she's no common lady's-maid.
 She fixes our private assignations, arranges meetings,
 Is the perfect go-between.

5 She's often fast-talked a too-hesitant Corinna
 Into coming over. She's never let me down.
 Hey, Napë! Here's a note I've written your mistress –
 Please deliver it *now*, without delay.
 You're not iron-hearted. There's no flinty streak in your
 nature,

10 And you're nobody's fool. You must
 Have taken a hit or two yourself in the wars of passion?
 Then help me—we're fighting on the same side.
 If she asks how I am, say I live in longing. My letter
 Provides all the details. Quick,

15 Don't let's waste time talking. Catch her at a free moment,
 Give her the note—and make sure
 She reads it at once. Watch her face and eyes as she does so,
 Expressions can be revealing of things to come.
 And take care she replies on the spot, with a good long letter –

20 Half-blank tablets drive me mad,
 So get her to crowd up her lines, and fill the margins
 From side to side. But wait –
 Why should she weary her fingers with all that scribbling?
 One single word is good enough: '*Come.*'

25 Then I'd wreath my victorious writing-tablet with laurel
 And hang it in Venus' shrine
 With this inscription: '*To Venus, from Ovid, for services
 rendered,*
One cheap wooden writing-tablet—now beyond price.'

I need sympathy. I'm downhearted. That wretched writing-
 tablet

Is back, with a dismal *No, can't make it today.*

There's something in omens. Just as she was departing

Napë stubbed her toe on the doorsill, and stopped.

5 Next time you're sent out, girl, remember to be more careful

While negotiating the threshold. Pick up your feet,

Keep off the bottle.

To hell with that damned obstructive

Tablet, its coffinwood frame

And *no*-saying wax (which I bet was extracted from hemlock

10 Honey, as specially gathered by Corsican bees),

That off-red surface, dyed—I'd supposed—with a tincture

Of cinnabar. Not true. It had tasted blood.

Cheap useless object—I'll dump you at some crossing

For a laden wagon to splinter with its wheels!

15 The craftsman who fashioned you from untrimmed timber –

I'll swear he had guilty hands. The tree itself

Must have been used as a gibbet, then turned into crosses

For some executioner. In its nasty shade

Hoarse nightjars lurked, a mass of vultures and screech-owls

20 Infested its branches, hatching eggs.

Was *this* the stuff to which I entrusted such loving

Messages for my mistress? I must have been mad.

Such a tablet would better suit the most prolix of legal

Documents, stuff to be droned out

25 By some gravel-voiced lawyer. It should lie with accounts and
ledgers

Recording the bad debts of a glum tycoon.

You in every way two-faced tablet! *Two*—that number

Was unlucky from the start. How vent

My fury? Curse you, may dry rot riddle your crumbling

30 Frame, and filthy white mildew blanch your wax!

She's on her way over the sea from her doddering husband,

The blonde day-bringer, wheels all aglint with frost –

What's the hurry, Aurora? Take it easy, let Memnon's spirit

Enjoy the yearly sacrifice by his birds!

5 Now, if ever, I love to lie in my mistress's tender

Embrace, feel her close by my side,

At this cool hour of deep sleep, with liquid bird-song

Tremulous in the air.

What's the hurry? All lovers, men and girls, resent your
coming:

10 Exert those rosy fingers, rein in awhile!

Seamen out in deep water, eyes fixed on the constellations,

Steer closer before your rising, don't yaw off course.

Even the weariest traveller's out to greet you,

Every soldier's armed and ready by the time you arrive.

15 You're always up first. You challenge the weary peasant,
trudging

Along with his mattock. You call

The ploughman to yoke up his weary oxen. You rob young

Children of sleep, drive them out to school

And the cruel cane. You send cultured guarantors crowding

20 Down to the courts, where a one-

Word pledge may lose them a fortune. Pleaders and advocates

Resent your summons, forcing them to resume

The daily legal grind. When a woman might still be resting

You jerk her back to dull domestic chores.

25 I could put up with everything else—but only a crusty

Misogynist, surely, would stand

For girls getting up at dawn? The times I've prayed that
darkness

Might stand fast against you, and the stars

Not vanish before your countenance, that a hurricane
 30 Would crack your axle, or your horses fall
 Headlong through blinding cloud! Why hurry, spoilsport?
 Are you black-hearted because your son was black?
 [*Could it be that she never burned up for that Ethiopian?*
 Or does she suppose her naughtiness unknown...?]
 35 How I wish Tithonus could spill the truth about you—no distaff
 Reputation in heaven would drop so low.
 You hurry away from him because he's so much older,
 To mount the chariot he weakly hates –
 But if it was your love, your Cephalus, you were embracing,
 40 You'd cry: 'Run slowly, horses of the night!'
 Why should I suffer in love just because your husband's
 senile?
 Did you marry the old buffer on my advice?
 Just think how long a sleep the Moon allowed her beloved
 Endymion—and she's as beautiful as you!
 45 The Father of Gods himself was so averse to seeing you,
 Once, that he ran two nights of love into one.
Ah: that last crack must have gone home—I saw her blushing.
 But the sun still (as usual) rose on time.

14

I *told* you to stop using rinses—and now just look at you!
 No hair worth mentioning left to dye.
 Why couldn't you let well alone? It grew so luxuriantly,
 Right down to below your hips,
 5 And fine—so fine you were scared to set it, like silken
 Threads in a vivid Chinese screen,
 Or the filament spun by a spider, the subtle creation
 That she hangs beneath some deserted beam.
 It was neither dark nor blonde, but a brindled auburn,
 10 A mixture of both, like some tall cedar when

The outer bark's stripped off, in a dew-wet precipitous
Valley of Ida. Not to mention the fact
That it was so tractable, could be dressed in a hundred styles,
and

Never made you get cross. With no pins
15 Or curlers to make it go brittle, no bristling side-combs,
Your maid could relax. I've been there
Often enough while she fixed it, but never once saw you
Pick up a hairpin and stick it in her arm.
If it was early morning, you'd be propped up among lilac
20 Pillows and coverlets, your hair
Not yet combed out. Yet even in tangled disorder
It still became you. You looked like a wild
Exhausted Maenad, *al fresco*.

Poor down-fine tresses,
What torture they had to endure!
25 You decided on corkscrew ringlets. The irons were heated,
Your poor hair crimped and racked
Into spiralling curls, 'It's a crime,' I told you, 'a downright
Crime to singe it like that. Why on earth
Can't you leave well alone? You'll *wreck* it, you obstinate
creature,
30 It's *not for burning*. Why, in its natural state
It'd make the best perm look silly –' No good. Her crowning
Glory, that any mod god might well
Have envied, sleek tresses like those that sea-wet naked
Dione holds up in the picture-gone, all gone.
35 Why complain of the loss? You silly girl, you detested
That waist-length tangle, so stop
Making sad *moues* in your mirror. You must get accustomed
To your own New Look, and forget
Yourself if you aim to attract. No rival's incantations

40 Or tisanes have harmed you, no witch
Has hexed your rinse, you haven't—touch wood—had an illness;
If your hair's fallen out, it's not
Any envious tongue that's to blame. You applied that
concoction

Yourself. It was you that did it. *All your fault.*

45 Still, after our German conquests a wig is easily come by –
A captive Mädchen's tresses will see you through.
You'll blush, it's true, when your borrowed plumage elicits
Admiration galore. You'll feel that the praise (like the
hair)

Has been bought. Once you really deserved it. Now each
compliment

50 Belongs to some Rhine maiden, not to you.
*Poor sweet—she's shielding her face to hide those ladylike
Blushes, and making a brave effort not to cry
As she stares at the ruined hair in her lap, a keepsake
Unhappily out of place.* Don't worry, love,

55 Just put on your make-up. This loss is by no means irreparable
—
Give it time, and your hair will grow back as good as
new.

15

Why, gnawing Envy, impute an idler's existence to me?
Why dismiss the poet as a drone?
What's your complaint? That I've failed (though young and
healthy) to follow

Tradition, or chase the dusty rewards
5 Of a soldier's career? That I haven't mugged up dull lawsuits,
Or sold my eloquence like a whore
In the courts and Forum? Such labours are soon forgotten.
What *I* seek is perennial fame,
Undying world-wide remembrance. While Ida and Tenedos

10 Still stand, while Simois still runs swift to the sea,
 Old Homer will live. While clustering grapes still ripen
 And wheat still falls to the scythe
 Hesiod's works will be studied. The verse of Callimachus –
 Weak in imagination, strong on technique –
 15 Has a worldwide readership. Sophoclean tragedy
 Is safe from Time's ravages. While sun and moon
 Survive, so will Aratus. While the world holds one devious
 servant,
 Stern father, blandishing whore, or ponce on the make
 Menander's immortal. Rough Ennius, spirited Accius
 20 Have names time will never destroy. What age
 Will not cherish great Varro's epic of Argo's voyage,
 Jason's quest for the Golden Fleece?
 The work of sublime Lucretius will prove immortal
 While the world itself endures;
 25 And so long as Rome's empire holds sway over the nations,
 Virgil's country poems, his *Aeneid*, will be read.
 While Cupid's armoury still consists of torch and arrows
 Tibullus' elegant verse
 Will always be quoted. From lands / of sunset to sunrise,
 Gallus,
 30 Gallus and his Lycoris, will be renowned.
 Though Time, in time, can consume the enduring ploughshare,
 Though flint itself will perish, poetry lives –
 Deathless, unfading, triumphant over kings and their
 triumphs,
 Richer than Spanish river-gold. Let the crowd
 35 Gape after baubles. To me may golden Apollo proffer
 A cup, brimming over, from the Castalian spring
 And a wreath of sun-loving myrtle. May my audience always
 Consist of star-crossed lovers. Never forget

It's the living that Envy feeds on. After death the pressure

40 Is taken off. All men get their due in the end.

So when the final flames have devoured my body, I shall

Survive, and my better part live on.

BOOK 2

1

A second batch of verses by that naughty provincial poet,
Naso, the chronicler of his own
Wanton frivolities; another of Love's commissions (warning
To puritans: *This volume is not for you*).

5 I want my works to be read by the far-from-frigid virgin
On fire for her sweetheart, by the boy
In love for the very first time. May some fellow-sufferer,
Perusing my anatomy of desire,
See his own passion reflected there, cry in amazement:

10 'Who told this scribbler about my private affairs?'

One time, I recall, I got started on an inflated epic

About War in Heaven, with all

Those hundred-handed monsters, and Earth's fell vengeance,
and towering

Ossa piled on Olympus (plus Pelion too).

15 But while I was setting up Jove-stormclouds and thunderbolts
gathered

Ready to hand, a superb defensive barrage –

My mistress staged a lock-out. I dropped Jupiter and his
lightnings

That instant, didn't give him another thought.

Forgive me, good Lord, if I found your armoury useless –

20 Her shut door ran to larger bolts

Than any *you* wielded. I went back to verses and compliments,

My natural weapons. Soft words

Remove harsh door-chains. There's magic in poetry, its power

Can pull down the bloody moon,

25 Turn back the sun, make serpents burst asunder

Or rivers flow upstream.

Doors are no match for such spellbinding, the toughest
Locks can be open-sesamed by its charms.
But epic's a dead loss for me. I'll get nowhere with swift-
footed
30 Achilles, or with either of Atreus' sons.
Old what's-his-name wasting twenty years on war and travel,
Poor Hector dragged in the dust –
No good. But lavish fine words on some young girl's profile
And sooner or later she'll tender herself as the fee,
35 An ample reward for your labours. So farewell, heroic
Figures of legend—the *quid*
Pro quo you offer won't tempt me. A bevy of beauties
All swooning over my love-songs—that's what *I* want.

2

One moment, Bagoas. Since you're your mistress's protector,
A word, pray, with you—brief, but to the point.
Yesterday afternoon, while strolling down that cloister
Where all the Danaid statues are on display
5 I saw her. Love at first sight. I dashed off a note—with
suggestions –
And got the nervous answer: *It's not allowed*.
Why not? I wrote back. It turned out that *you* were the trouble,
An over-strict guardian. Look,
If your head's screwed on, watchdog, you'll quit making
enemies –
10 Get feared, men soon wish you dead.
Her husband's a fool, too. Why spend all that effort guarding
What loses nothing when ignored?
Still, if he wants, let him cherish his love-struck illusions
And believe that his toast of the town
15 Is a model of chastity! Just allow your mistress her freedom –
On the quiet—and she'll repay you in kind.

Make a deal, you'll find the lady in thrall to the servant;

** Make a deal. If you're windy, turn a blind eye.

She's reading a note on the quiet—it's from her mother.

20 A stranger appears—in two shakes he's an old friend.

When she wants to visit some girlfriend she claims is unwell,
don't

Argue—accept the illness as a fact.

[If she's late coming back, don't wait up, that's too exhausting.

Get your head down, take forty winks.]

25 Don't ask what games can be played in the precinct of linen-

Draped Isis; don't let the packed

Theatre disturb you. Accomplices get their rake-off **

And silence costs little effort. Such an aide

Enjoys high favour. Indiscipline brings no beatings

30 To *him*, he's top dog, the rest trash.

To hoodwink the lady's husband, ingenious cover-stories

Must be concocted: a tale that satisfies *her*

Will be swallowed by *him*. He may frown, or pull damnable
faces,

But it's what Baby Doll says that goes.

35 Now and then, of course, she must stage a noisy altercation

With you too—call you a monster, pretend to cry,

While you bring some charge against her she can prove ill-
founded –

One false accusation, and who'll credit the truth?

Thus your position—and savings—will grow more substantial

40 Daily. Take my advice, and you'll soon be free.

It's informers (as doubtless you've noticed) who get iron
collars

Around their necks. Break faith, and a dank

Prison awaits you. Loose talk left Tantalus thirsty for ever

Though up to his neck in water, clutching at fruit

45 Always just out of reach. Io's too-conscientious protector

Died young—she was deified. I've seen
A man's legs rotting in shackles because he compelled some
Reluctant husband to admit himself *cocu*.
He deserved far worse. Such a ploy was doubly malicious –
50 Killed X's self-respect, *and* his wife's good name.
Charges of this sort, believe me, are anathema to a husband;
Even when he listens, they're no help.
If he's cool, your officious tattling will be met with
indifference;

If in love, he'll be badly upset. What's more,
55 Most adultery (flagrant or not) remains non-proven –
A husband's judgement always favours his wife.
Though he be an eyewitness, he'll still believe her denials,
Discredit his own eyes, deceive himself.
If he sees her tears, he'll start crying too, and threaten
60 The slanderer with a writ. Why bother to fight
When the odds are so stacked against you? You're sure to be
beaten

(Note pun) with the lady perched on her judge's lap.
We're not hatching some crime, we don't come together for
the decoction

Of poisonous doses. No dagger glints in *my* hand.
65 All we need is your consent to some quiet love-making –
It's hard to imagine a more harmless request.

3

Bad luck that your mistress should have a keeper who's
neither

Male nor female, who can't enjoy true sex!
The man who was first to sever boys' genital members
Should have been castrated himself.
5 If you'd ever fallen in love, your attitude would be different:
More obliging, complaisant with my demands.
But you weren't born to ride a warhorse, or handle weapons –

A spear in your hand would look out of place.
Leave such things to real men, abjure male aspirations,
10 Be content to soldier under your lady's flag.
Give her devoted service, and she'll reward you; without her
What use would you have? She's the right
Age for all sportive pleasures. She's attractive. A thousand
pities
To waste that figure out of sheer neglect!
15 And despite your strict reputation, she *could* have got round
you –
A really determined couple is hard to resist.
Still, it seemed more appropriate to try persuasion first, and
Give you one last chance to cash in on the deal.

4

I wouldn't attempt to defend my spotty morals, or whitewash
My flaws with aggressive lies.
If it's any help, I confess. Admission of guilt. Then why not
Go the whole hog, indict
5 My faults myself? I hate what I am, yet (try as I may) can't
Not be the thing that revolts me. It's hell
Being stuck with what you can't kick. I lack all firmness
And strength to control my moods, get whirled away
Like a skiff in a current. There's no one type of beauty
10 That arouses my longing: if I'm always in love
Blame my wide-ranging interests. Shyness and modesty spark
me
Off every time—a demurely lowered face
And I'm hooked. But it's just the same if she's pertly forward:
Sophistication promises well in bed.
15 A primly old-fashioned appearance, then? I always suspect
that's
Mere camouflage for unacknowledged desire.
A bluestocking turns me on with her intellectual powers,

A featherbrain ditto just by being naïve.

Then there's the girl who tells me Callimachus is a bungler

20 Compared to me—I always go for my fans –

Or the critical termagant who slates both poems and author:

How I long to be laid by her as well!

One's got a slinky walk: *that* gets me. Another's uptight –

She can be softened out with a little sex.

25 A fine operatic voice, for me, is a standing temptation

To smother the singer with kisses in mid-song.

Guitar-lessons help. Watch those fingers—the chords, the
glissandos!

How fail to fall in love with such clever hands?

Then think of the floor-show dancer, arms weaving in rhythm,

30 Doing undulant bumps and grinds:

Never mind about me (I'm just omnisusceptible), make pure

Hippolytus watch her act

And even *he'd* go priapic.

You're tall, like the heroines of legend,

Lie the full length of a bed;

35 But petite girls, too, are attractive. I'm sold on *both* sizes –

Long and short alike are equally to my taste.

The fashionable I enjoy at their face-value, the unsmart

For all that they *could* be, *à la mode*.

I'm crazy for girls who are fair-haired and pale-complexioned

–

40 But brunettes make marvellous lovers too:

The sight of dark tresses against a snow-white neck reminds
me

That Leda was famed for her black curls,

While a flaxen poll calls up thoughts of blonde Aurora –

My sex-life runs the entire

45 Mythological gamut. My tastes are equally all-embracing:

technique Young girls have the looks—but when it comes to

Give me an older woman. In short, there's a vast cross-section
Of desirable beauties in Rome—and *I want them all!*

5

'Time and again all I've wanted was to die, and end it.

(Get behind me, Cupid!) No love

Is worth *that* much. You've been hell for me since the
beginning,

I feel like death whenever I recall

5 The way you deceived me. It wasn't a half-erased letter-tablet
 That laid bare your activities. No secret gifts
 Pointed the finger. I wish—*how* I wish!—that my case was
hopeless:

Why does it have to be so damnably good?

Lucky the man who dares go bail for his lady-love's

10 Reputation, who knows she can say

"I didn't do it." Iron-hearted, not to mention masochistic,

Is the prosecutor who aims

To draw blood, to get his conviction. No, I was an eyewitness

Of your crime: not (as you thought) asleep

15 From the drinking after dinner, but sober, and well aware of

Those eyebrow-signals, those eloquent nods,

Ocellades and smiles, little messages traced on the table

By your finger, in wine; the remarks

Loaded with hidden meaning, the code-words given

20 A private significance. When

Most of the guests were gone, and the table had emptied
(except for

One or two of the boys, out cold),

I saw you exchanging the most outrageous kisses,
acquaintance

Of tongues well under way: by no means the style

25 In which a nice girl would peck at her prissy brother,
 But intimate, passionate, a lovers' embrace.
 I can't imagine Diana bestowing such torrid kisses
 On Phoebus: Venus and Mars
 Was more like it. "What are you doing?" I cried. "This is
 alienation
 30 Of lovers' rights—mine. I claim
 An exclusive monopoly. What's yours and mine is private –
 No third party is going to share *my* goods."
 Thus I raged on at her, half angry, half miserable,
 While a blush of guilt rose to her cheeks –
 35 Like the dawn sky tinged faint red by the bride of Tithonus
 Or a girl when she sees her betrothed,
 Or roses bright among lilies, or the enchanted
 Face of a harvest moon,
 Or the stain that some Lydian woman can put upon ivory
 40 To stop it turning yellow with the years:
 Such, or something much like it, was her complexion—she'd
 never
 Looked prettier, though the effect
 Was quite accidental. A downcast gaze became her, nothing
 Brought out her beauty like remorse.
 45 I felt like tearing her hair out, new set and all, I wanted
 To rake my nails across her delicate cheeks –
 But one glimpse of that sweet face and my violence
 evaporated:
 My girl's best defence, as always, was herself.
 I abandoned the strong-arm act, turned suppliant, begged her
 50 For some equally juicy kisses. She laughed,
 And complied with enthusiasm—the kind of sizzling
 performance
 Guaranteed to stave off even the triple bolt
 Of Jupiter in his fury. Yet one fear still torments me:

Did *he* get the same? I could wish

55 That those kisses had been less torrid, not *so* much better
 Than the ones I taught her. She'd learnt
 Something new, it would seem. There's pleasure too keen for
comfort –

 Why did our tongues ever meet?
 That's not all I'm alarmed by, either. If this connection
60 Makes an intimacy of tongues
 What else might not be conjoined? Such kisses could only
 Be learnt in bed. Some *maestro* has been well paid.

6

Parrot, that feathered mimic from India's dawnlands,
 Is dead. Come flocking, birds,
To his funeral: come, all you godfearing airborne
 Creatures, beat breasts with wings,
5 Mourn, claw your polls, tear out soft feathers (your hair), and
 Pipe high your sad lament.
Philomela, nightingale, the ancient crime of Tereus
 Which you lament is long past –
Divert your grief to the obsequies of a rare and modern
10 Bird: poor Itylus' case was tragic, but antique.
All wing-borne voyagers through the clear empyrean
 Lament now, and above all
His friend the turtle-dove. They lived in complete agreement,
 Their bond of faith held firm to the end.
15 What Pylades was to Orestes of Argos, that, Parrot,
 Turtle-dove was to you—while Fate allowed.
Yet of no avail your devotion, your rare and beautiful
plumage,
 Your adaptable mimic's voice;
Not even the care that my darling lavished on you –
20 Poor Polly, paragon of birdhood, is dead.

So green his feathers, they dimmed the cut emerald; scarlet

His beak, with saffron spots.

No bird on earth could copy a voice more closely

Or sound so articulate.

25 Fate, jealous, removed him—that unaggressive creature,

That talkative devotee of peace,

29 With his tiny appetite, whose love of conversation

30 Left him little leisure for food,

31 Who lived on a diet of nuts, used poppy-seed to encourage

32 Sound sleep: kept his thirst at bay

27 With nothing but water. Quails spend their whole life fighting –

28 Maybe that's how they reach a ripe old age.

Carnivorous vultures, kites gyring high in the heavens,

Weather-wise jackdaws, prophets of rain to come,

35 All are long-lived—while Minerva's *bête noire*, the raven,

Can outlast nine generations. Yet Parrot is dead,

That loquacious parody of human utterance, that bonanza

From the eastern edge of the world.

Greedy death almost always picks off the best ones early –

40 It's the third-raters who reach a ripe old age.

Thersites attended the funeral of Protesilaus; Hector

Was ashes while his brothers still lived.

What point in recalling the desperate prayers my sweetheart
uttered?

Some stormy sirocco blew them out to sea.

45 Six days he survived, and then, at dawn on the seventh,

His thread of destiny ran out.

Yet somehow, though dying, he could still find utterance,

And the last words he ever spoke were: 'Corinna,
farewell!'

Beneath a hill in Elysium, where dark ilex clusters

50 And the moist earth is for ever green,

There exists—or so I have heard—the pious fowls’ heaven
(All ill-omened predators barred).

Harmless swans roam after food there, there dwells the
phoenix,

That long-lived, ever-solitary bird;

55 There Juno’s peacock spreads out his splendid fantail
Amid the billing and cooing of amorous doves;
And there, in this woodland haven, the feathered faithful
Welcome Parrot, flock round to hear him talk.

His bones lie buried under a parrot-sized tumulus

60 With a tiny headstone bearing these words:
R.I.P. Polly: this tribute from his loving mistress:
‘Articulate beyond a common bird’.

7

Am I always to be on trial against new accusations?

Pleading my case so often, win or lose, is a bore.

Suppose we’re at the theatre: one backward glance, and your
jealous

Eye will deduce a mistress up in the gods.

5 Any good-looking woman need only quiz me—at once you’re
Convinced it’s a put-up job.

If I say a girl’s nice, you try to tear my hair out;

If I damn her, you think I’m covering up.

If my complexion is healthy, that means I’ve gone off you;

10 If pale, then I’m dying of love for someone else.

How I wish I’d some genuine infidelity on my conscience –

The guilty find punishment easier to take.

But by such wild accusations and false assumptions

You devalue your rage. Don’t forget

15 How the wretched long-eared ass, when too heavily beaten,
Gets stubborn, goes slow.

And now this fresh ‘crime’—I’ve been having an affair with

Cypassis, your lady's-maid!

If I really wanted some fun on the side, I ask you, would I

20 Pick a lower-class drudge? God forbid –

What gentleman would fancy making love to a servant,

Embracing that lash-scarred back?

Besides, she's an expert coiffeuse, her skilful styling

Has made her your favourite. What?

25 Proposition a maid so devoted to her mistress?

Not likely. She'd turn me down—and blab.

By Venus and the bow of her winged offspring,

I protest my innocence!

8

O expert in creating a thousand hairstyles, worthy

To have none but goddesses form your clientele,

Cypassis!—and (as I know from our stolen pleasures)

No country beginner: just right

5 For your mistress, but righter for me—what malicious gossip

Put the finger on us? How did Corinna know

About our sleeping together? I didn't blush, did I,

Or blurt out some telltale phrase?

I'm sorry I told her no man in his proper senses

10 Could go overboard for a maid –

Achilles fell madly in love with *his* maid, Briseis,

Agamemnon was besotted by the slave-

Priestess Cassandra. I can't pretend to be socially up on

Those two—then why should I despise

15 What's endorsed by royalty? Anyway, when Corinna

Shot *you* a dirty look, you blushed right up.

It was *my* presence of mind, if you remember, that saved us,

When I swore that convincing oath –

(Venus, goddess, *please* make the warm siroccos

20 Blow my innocent perjury out to sea!)

I did you a good turn. Now it's time for repayment.

Dusky Cypassis, I want to sleep with you. Today.

Don't shake your head and play scared, you ungrateful creature,

You're under a condominium of two

25 And only one's satisfied. If you're silly enough to refuse, I'll

Reveal all we've done in the past, betray my own

Betrayal. I'll tell your mistress just where we met, and how often,

And how many times we did it, *and* in what ways!

9

No terms could be strong enough, Cupid, to express my resentment

At the treacherous way you've settled yourself in my heart.

What's your grudge against me? Have I ever once deserted

Your standards? Then why should I

5 Be the one who gets shot from behind? How come your torch and arrows

Are turned against friends? Small renown

From a military walkover. Remember how Achilles, after

Spearing Telephus, rendered him first-aid?

For the hunter, pursuit is all. Once caught, his quarry

10 Is forgotten, while he harks off on a new trail.

Against stubborn opposition you're slow in coming forward:

It's we, your faithful supporters, who suffer worst.

Passion has worn me down to a living skeleton: why blunt

Barbed arrows on skin and bone?

15 There are so many loveless people, both men and women –

If you want a popular triumph, try *them*.

Had Rome not advanced her power the wide world over

She'd still be a straggle of thatched huts.

The worn-out soldier retires on his State allotment, an ageing

20 Racehorse gets put out to grass,
Warships are dry-docked, the discharged gladiator
Hangs up his wooden sword.

Well, I'm a veteran too—see my sexual campaign-ribbons –
And it's high time I quit the field.

9B

[25] If I heard a voice from heaven say 'Live without loving,'
I'd beg off. Girls are such exquisite hell.

When desire's slaked, when I'm sick of the whole business,
Some kink in my wretched nature drives me back.

It's like riding a hard-mouthed horse, that bolts
headlong, foam flying

[30] From his bit, and won't answer the rein –
Or being aboard a ship, on the point of docking, in
harbour,

When a sudden squall blows you back out to sea:
That's how the veering winds of desire so often catch me –

10 Hot Love up to his lethal tricks again.

[35] All right, boy, skewer me. I've dropped my defences,
I'm an easy victim. Why, by now

Your arrows practically know their own way to the target
And feel less at home in their quiver than in me.

15 I'm sorry for any fool who rates sleep a prime blessing

[40] And enjoys it from dusk to dawn
Night in, night out. What's sleep but cold death's reflection?
Plenty of time for rest when you're in the grave.

My mistress deceives me—so what? I'd rather be lied to

20 Than ignored. I can live on hope. Today

[45] She'll be all endearments, tomorrow throw screaming
tantrums,

Envelop me one night, lock me out the next.

War, like love, is a toss-up. If Mars is inconstant, he gets that

From you, his stepson. You're quite

25 Unpredictable, Cupid, with your lucky-dip favours,

[50] And more volatile than your own wings.

Maybe you'll hear my appeal, though—your delectable mother

Might help there—and settle in as king of my heart?

Then admit the flighty sex *en masse* to your dominions

30 And you'd have guaranteed popularity all round.

10

It was *you*, no doubt about it, Graecinus: I clearly remember

How you said no man could possibly fall in love

With two girls at once. I believed you. I dropped my defences.

Result—double love-life. Embarrassing. All your fault.

5 There's nothing to choose between them for looks. They both
dress smartly,

On performance they're just about neck and neck –

I can't make up my mind which I find more attractive,

But fancy first A, then B,

Swung to and fro like a yacht in a choppy crosswind,

10 My erotic psyche torn

Between rival claimants. Didn't one girl produce sufficient

Anxiety for me, Venus? Why double my load?

If it comes to that, why put extra stars in heaven,

Top up the sea with water, releaf the trees?

15 Still, things could be worse. At least I'm not starved of
affection.

A celibate life is something I'd only wish

On my very worst enemies. Just imagine sleeping

Plumb in the middle of a double bed!

Give me some wild love-making to disrupt dull slumber,

20 With congenial company between the sheets,

And no holds barred. If one girl can drain my powers

Fair enough—but if she can't, I'll take two.
I can stand the strain. My limbs may be thin, but they're wiry;
Though I'm a lightweight, I'm hard –
25 And virility feeds on sex, is boosted by practice;
No girl's ever complained about *my* technique.
Often enough I've spent the whole night in pleasure, yet still
been
Fit as a fighting cock next day.
What bliss to expire in Love's duel—that, God willing,
30 Is the way *I'd* choose to die!
Let the soldier stick out his chest as a target for hostile
Arrows, purchase eternal renown with blood;
Let the cash-hungry merchant make one voyage too many
And wash the lies down his throat
35 With the brine of the trade-routes. But I'd like to reach
dissolution
In mid-act, die on the job.
Easy enough to guess what some mourner will say at my
funeral:
'His death was all of a piece with his life.'

11

The trouble began when they felled those pines on Pelion
And the barren sea-lanes beheld
Argo, amazing Argo, on her reckless quest for the Golden
Fleece, threading the Clashing Rocks.
5 Why didn't she spring a fatal leak? If only no man
Had ever bothered the wide
Seas with an oar! Corinna has plans for a voyage, leaving
The household gods we shared, that familiar bed.
Sweetheart, why make your poor poet freeze in conventional
10 Panic at all those high rhetorical winds?
Besides, the sea's so unattractive—no cities or woodlands,

Just an endless blue expanse;
And don't think those delicate shells, those variegated pebbles
That you find at the water's edge
15 Exist in mid-ocean. Paddle barefoot along the foreshore,
It's safe for girls there. Don't plunge in
Or you'll find yourself out of your depth. Why not learn about
maelstroms,
Sea-monsters and tempests, from other travellers' tales?
Let *them* evoke rock-fanged and towering coastlines, or African
20 Quicksands. Take every word on trust –
Credulity costs nothing, suffers no shipwreck,
Is immune to the fiercest storm.
Too late to gaze back at dry land when you've cast off hawsers
And your vessel is driving out to sea.
25 While the anxious lookout blenches at violent crosswinds,
Sees death in the crowding waves.
And suppose some power whips those waves to a fury, just
watch
The colour drain from your face,
Just hear you invoking the patron gods of sailors,
30 Envyng anyone ashore on dry land!
Safer to stay in bed, read books, and practise
Fingerwork on your lute –
But if your mind's made up, if I'm wasting exhortations
On the wind, then may all marine
35 Deities grant you smooth sailing—I'll hold the whole lot of
them
Responsible if you drown.
Remember me while you're away, and may a stronger
following
Wind fill your sails on the homeward run!.
May storm blasts and tidal waves (with divine direction)
40 Get the sea running this way—one word

From you, and a westerly breeze will swell your canvas

(You can haul on the sheets yourself).

I'll keep watch from the shore, I'll sight your familiar vessel

Before anyone else. 'My goddess is aboard,'

45 I'll tell the crowd. I'll bring you ashore on my shoulders,

Cover you with kisses, offer up

The victim I promised for your safe return. We'll have a
picnic,

Use some dune as a table, heap sand

For our couch, and over the wine you'll tell me endless stories

50 Of how your ship nearly went down

In a raging storm—but of course *you* weren't scared by sudden

Typhoons, or dark nights, you were on your way back

To me. I'll believe all you say, I don't care if it's fiction –

Why shouldn't I indulge my own desires?

55 May bright-dazzling Lucifer whip up his celestial

Horses, and bring me that moment—soon!

12

A wreath for my brows, a wreath of triumphal laurel!

Victory—Corinna is here, in my arms,

Despite the united efforts of husband, door, and porter

(That unholy trinity) to keep her secure

5 From all lovers, however artful. This bloodless conquest

Demands a super-triumph. Look at the spoils.

What did my generalship win? Some town with crumbling
defences

And a shallow moat? Oh no, *I* captured a *girl*!

When Troy fell at last, after that ten-year struggle,

10 How much of the credit went to the High Command,

And how much to the troops? There's no army to share *my*
glory,

The credit is mine alone, I'm a one-man band,

Commander, cavalry, infantry, standard-bearer, announcing

With one voice: *Objective achieved.*

15 What's more, mere luck played no part at all in *my* triumph:

Unswerving perseverance did the trick.

No novelty, either, about the cause of warfare. Europe

And Asia would never have been

Embroidered without Helen's abduction. It was a woman

20 Brought Centaurs and Lapiths to blows

Over the wine at that wedding. A woman, Lavinia, got the

Trojans fighting again, for the second time,

When they set foot on Latin soil. While our City was still new-
founded

Those Sabine girls screaming rape

25 Provoked most bloody reprisals. I've seen two bulls battling

Over a snow-white heifer—she egged them on.

You could say I'm Cupid's conscript, called up, like so many
others,

For front-line service—but no shedding of blood.

13

Corinna got pregnant—and rashly tried an abortion.

Now she's lying in danger of her life.

She said not a word. That risk, and she never told me!

I ought to be furious, but I'm only scared.

5 It was me by whom she conceived—or at least, I assume so:

I often jump to conclusions. Ilithyia, Queen

Of the Afric shore, whose presence broods over alluvial

Canopus, Memphis, palmy Pharos and that

Broad delta where swift Nile discharges seaward

10 In seven meandering streams:

By your sistrum I beg you, by the holy head of Anubis

(So may Osiris evermore love your rites,

The slow snake writhe through your sanctuary, the horned

bull

Apis grace your processions!), ah look down

15 In mercy, Goddess: through one spare both of us; in your
Hands her life lies—and mine in hers.

She has kept your holy days, a regular worshipper,

Asperged by the eunuch priests

With dripping laurel-switches—and your compassion

20 For girls in labour is well-known.

Ilithyia, Goddess of Childbirth, hear my entreaties, save her –

She's worth it, truly. Just say the word,

And I'll robe myself in white, burn incense on your smoking

Altar, lay at your feet the gifts I vowed,

25 With a label reading 'From Ovid, in grateful thanks for
Corinna's

Recovery'—ah, please make it all come true!

Look, sweetheart, I know how you're feeling, I know it's no
time for

Recriminations—but *never* try that again!

14

What's the point of a girl being exempt from active service –

No shield-drill, no column-of-route

Marching away to the wars—if she uses weapons against her

Self, suffers hurt from her own hand?

5 The woman who first ripped foetus from placenta should have
Died by such butchery herself.

Would you *really* chance your arm in that bloody arena

Just to keep your belly unwrinkled? Suppose

Mothers in olden times had caught on to such practices,

10 Mankind would be quite extinct,

And we'd need a new-style stone-throwing demiurge

To repeople our empty world.

Who would have cracked Priam's might if the sea-goddess

Thetis

Had refused to carry her load?

15 Had Ilia ripped those twins from her swollen belly

Our City's Founder would have been lost.

Had Venus aborted the unborn Aeneas, no Caesars today
would

Exist in the world. You too

Would have perished, your beauty still embryonic, had your

20 Mother attempted the same game

Take my own case—I'd rather die from a surfeit of loving

Than find myself mother-scuppered before birth.

Why cheat the laden vine when grapes are ripening

Or strip an apple-tree while the fruit's still green?

25 Let all things mature in season, come forth, develop –

Have patience. Life is a prize

Well worth the waiting. Why probe your entrails with lethal

Instruments? Why poison what's still unborn?

Child-blood on Medea's hands excites our horror,
dismembered

30 Itys brings tears to the eye:

Parental savagery rampant. Yet both these women had bitter

Cause to destroy their own dear flesh –

Revenge on a husband. But *you*—what Tereus or Jason

Drives *you* to commit this deadly self-abuse?

35 No Armenian tigress would foul her den with such actions:

No lioness would destroy her own cubs.

Yet tender young girls do this—though not with impunity:
often

The uterine murderess dies herself,

Dies, and is carried out for cremation, hair all dishevelled,

40 To cries of 'Serve her right!' from the passers-by.

May these utterances of mine be scattered down the wind, and

No weight attach to such ill-omened words!
Be merciful, Gods. Let her first offence go unpunished,
That's all I ask. If she errs again—then strike!

15

Ring of mine, made to encircle my pretty mistress's finger,
Valuable only in terms of the giver's love,
Go, and good welcome! May she receive you with pleasure,
Slip you over her knuckle there and then.

5 May you fit her as well as she fits me, rub snugly
Around her finger, precisely the right size!
Lucky ring to be handled by my mistress! I'm developing
A miserable jealousy of my own gift.

But suppose I could *be* the ring, transformed in an instant
10 By some famous magician's art –

Then, when I felt like running my hand down Corinna's
Dress, and exploring her breasts, I'd work
Myself off her finger (tight squeeze or not) and by crafty
Cunning drop into her cleavage. Let's say

15 She was writing a private letter—I'd have to seal it,
And a dry stone sticks on wax:
She'd moisten me with her tongue. Pure bliss—provided
I didn't have to endorse any hostile remarks
Against myself. If she wanted to put me away in her jewel-
20 Box, I'd cling tighter, refuse to budge.

(Don't worry, my sweet, I'd never cause you discomfort, or
burden

Your slender finger with an unwelcome weight.)
Wear me whenever you take a hot shower, don't worry
If water runs under your gem –

25 Though I fancy the sight of you naked would rouse my
passions, leave me

A ring of visibly virile parts...

Pure wishful thinking! On your way, then, little present,
And show her you come with all my love.

16

I am here in Sulmona, my own Pelignian riding,
A small place, but lush with streams:
Though the ground parch and crack under a blazing summer
Sun, though the Dog Star glares

5 Like brass, clear rills still wander through these fertile
meadows,

The grass remains fresh and green.

Wheat yields well in this soil, the vine still better; in places

You can glimpse an olive grove,

And along the slow river-bank, by knee-deep pastures,

10 The turf grows rank and moist.

But my flame isn't here—or rather, to change the imago,

Though my heart's on fire, the kindling spark is away.

Offered a place in the sky between Castor and Pollux, I'd still
say

No. What's heaven worth minus you?

15 May those who have scored the world with endless highways

Lie uneasy in dank clay graves!

If they *had* to cut trunk-roads, they should have made it a rule
that

Girls were obliged to travel with their beaux.

Suppose I was crossing the Alps in a blizzard, all goose-
pimples –

20 With my girl along I'd take the trip in my stride.

With her, I'd cheerfully sail through sand-shoals, or put to sea
when

A gale was blowing full blast;

I'd baulk at nothing—the monsters yelping from Scylla's

Virgin groin, the reefs of Cape Malea,

25 Those maelstrom waters that wreck-glutted Charybdis

Spews up and sucks down by turns –
 Even suppose a typhoon took charge of us, and towering
 Waves washed our guardian gods away,
 You could wind your white arms about my shoulders—so
 lissom
 30 A weight would be easy borne:
 Think of the times young Leander swam over to Hero, till that
 Last night when the lamp blew out
 And he was lost. But without you, my sweet, even this, my
 favourite
 Landscape—these water-meadows, the rows
 35 Of teeming vines, a cool breeze stirring the treetops, some
 peasant
 Singing away as he waters his patch of land –
 Looks barren and strange, un-Pelignian, somewhere else, quite
 different
 From the farm on which I was born:
 More like Scythia, or the bloody rock of Prometheus,
 40 With such neighbours as Britons in woad
 Or wild Cilician) pirates. Elm loves vine, vine sticks with elm—
 then
 Why must my mistress and I
 Be parted so often? You swore you'd stay with me always,
 On my life you swore it, by
 45 Your eyes, those stars of my heart; but a girl's oath is lighter
 Than leaves in autumn, whirled
 Away by wind or wave. Yet if you've a glimmer of feeling
 Left for me, then make your promises deeds,
 Get out the trap, harness your quick-stepping ponies,
 50 Shake up the reins, and away,
 Wild manes flying! May all winding roads and valleys
 Be straight where you pass, and the high hills lie down
 for you!

Anyone who considers enslavement to girls disgraceful

Will undoubtedly write me off as a disgrace.

It's not losing my name I mind—I just wish the goddess

Of Paphos and sea-girt Cythera would cool it off

5 In her dealings with me; and if I *had* to fall for a beauty

Why couldn't she have been kind?

But a profile breeds pride, and Corinna's loveliness makes her

Treat me like din. She knows herself too well,

Gets her haughty ways (I suspect) from her mirror-image—and
never

10 Looks at it till she's made up.

You're a spoilt beauty, darling, your face is too seductive

(One look at it and I'm hooked) –

But you *still* have no call to despise me, when lesser

Breeds can aspire to greatness. We know

15 How the nymph Calypso lost her heart to a mortal

And held him against his will;

A sea-nymph (the story goes) bedded down with Peleus,
Egeria

Made it with Numa the Just,

And Vulcan has rights over Venus, despite his smithy

20 And that shameful twisted limp.

Well, look at the metre I'm using—*that* limps. But together

Long and short lines combine

In a heroic couplet. So take me, darling,

On your own terms (to lay

25 Down the law in bed would become you). I shan't be an
accusation

You're glad to get rid of; our love

Won't ever require disowning. I have capital assets,

Good poems—and many women aspire to fame

Through my art. I know one who goes round saying she's
Corinna:

30 What wouldn't the poor thing give for her dream
To be true? But poplar-fringed Po and icy Eurotas flow ever
 Apart: none but you shall be sung
In my verses, you and you only shall give my creative
 Impulse its shape and theme.

18

While you are taking your poem up to the wrath of Achilles
 And arming your oath-bound heroes for the fray,
Love-in-idleness, Macer, and the shades of dalliance
 Preoccupy *me*. That tender erotic urge
5 Shatters my high-flown intentions. The times I've ejected
 My mistress, only to have her nestle back
In my lap. I'm ashamed, I told her. Weeping, she whispered:
 'Ashamed of loving poor me?' and wound her arms
Tight round my neck, sabotaged me with unending
10 Kisses. So, I'm surrendering, have recalled
My imagination from military active service, to cope with
 A sex-war on the domestic front.
Still, I *did* assume the sceptre, began writing a tragic opus –
 Tragedy suited my style, I was going well,
But Love guffawed at my costume: that cloak, those crimson
15 buskins,
 The sceptre I'd grabbed in my plebeian paw.
Once again the will of my obstinate mistress checked me,
 And passion has triumphed over the tragic bard.
Now I stick to my proper last-verse-lectures on seduction
20 (I tend to be wrong-footed by my own advice!),
Or love-lorn heroines' letters–Penelope to Ulysses,
 Phyllis' tearful complaint on being ditched;
Appeals to Paris, Macareus, ungrateful Jason; something

Calculated to stir Hippolytus *and*

- 25 His father; or the Final Message Department–Dido clutching
A naked sword, and Sappho her Lesbian lyre.
My friend Sabinus has played international postman
With uncommon speed–replies
From all over the world are now in: Penelope remembers
30 Ulysses’ hand, Phaedra has read the note
Hippolytus penned; Aeneas (turned pious) has answered
Poor Dido’s appeal; there’s even a *billet-doux*
For Phyllis, if she’s alive still; for Hypsipyle an unpleasant
Comeback from Jason; Sappho, whose love is returned,
35 Gives the lyre she vowed to Apollo. Even you, friend Macer,
– Insofar as it’s safe for a martial poet–lace
Your warfare with ‘Love the Golden’: Paris, adulterous Helen
(Noble but Naughty), Laodameia (True
Unto Death). If I know you, you’ll get more pleasure from that
lot
40 Than from warfare–so why not give up and join *my* camp?

19

- You* may not feel any need (and more fool you) to guard that
Girl of yours–but it sharpens *my* desire,
So would you oblige? What’s allowed is a bore, it’s what isn’t
That turns me on. What cold clod
5 Could woo with his rival’s approval? We lovers need hope
and despair in
Alternate doses. An intermittent rebuff
Makes us promise the earth. Who wants a beautiful woman
When she never deceives him? I can’t
Love a girl who’s not intermittently bitchy. Corinna spotted
10 My weakness (full marks!) and saw how
To use it against me. The times she invented a headache,
And when I still hung around, just threw me out,

Or pretended she'd had an affair, looking horribly guilty
 When in fact she'd done nothing at all –
 15 And having thus quickly rekindled my cooling ardour
 Would suddenly switch her mood
 To the ultra-compliant. Her compliments, her sweet nothings,
 Her kisses—oh God, her kisses! So you too,
 My latest eye-ravisher, must ensnare me at times by
 pretending
 20 To be frightened: must—on occasion—say No,
 And leave me there, prostrate on your doorstep, to suffer
 Long hours of frosty cold, the whole night through.
 Act thus, and my love will endure, grow stronger with each
 passing
 Year—that's the way I like it, that feeds the flame,
 25 Love too indulged, too compliant, will turn your stomach
 Like a surfeit of sweet rich food.
 Had Danaë never been locked in that brazen turret, would
 Jupiter
 Ever have got her with child?
 When Juno transmogrified Io into a horned heifer
 30 She increased the girl's sex-appeal.
 If you're after what's lawful and easy, then why not gather
 Leaves from the trees, or drink
 Water out of the Tiber? To prolong your dominion over
 Your lover calls for deception. (I hope I won't
 35 Have cause to regret that statement.) Yet come what may,
 indulgence
 Irks me. I flee the eager, pursue the coy.
 And as for *you*, man, so careless of your good lady,
 Why not start locking up at night?
 Why not ask who it is comes tapping, ever so softly,
 40 On your front door—or why it is the dogs
 Start barking at midnight? What about all those to-and-fro

missives

The maid delivers? How come your wife now sleeps
Alone so often? Why can't you get really worried just
Once in a while, allow me to display

45 My skill at deception? To covet the wife of a dummy
Is like stealing sand off the beach.

I'm warning you: put your foot down, play the heavy husband,
Or I'll start going cold on your wife!

I've stood it quite long enough, always hoping you'd lock her

50 Away out of sight, so that I

Could outwit you. But no. You clod, you put up with things no
husband

Should stand for a moment. Let me have the girl
And there's an end to my passion. Won't you *ever* deny me
Entry, won't you beat me up one night?

55 Can't I ever feel scared? have insomnia? sigh in frustration?
Won't you give me some good excuse

To wish you dead? I've no time for complaisant, pimping
husbands –

Their kinkiness spoils my fun.
Find someone else, who *likes* your easy-going habits, or if you
60 Must have me as a rival, then *get tough!*

BOOK 3

1

There's this ancient wood—no axe has thinned it for ages,

It might well be some spirit's home.

At its centre, a sacred spring, an arched limestone grotto,

And sweet birdsong all around.

5 While I was strolling here, through an overwoven

Dapple of shade, and wondering just what task

My Muse should embark on next, there appeared before me

Elegy, perfumed hair caught up in a knot,

And short—I think—in one foot: good figure, nice dress, a loving

10 Expression. Even her lameness looked chic.

Behind her stalked barnstorming Tragedy, fraught brow
hidden

By flowing hair, mantle atrail in the dust,

Left hand waving a royal sceptre, high Lydian

Boots encasing her calves.

15 'Won't you *ever*', she asked me, 'have done with love as a
subject?

Why get stuck in the same old poetic rut?

Your efforts to shock make gossip for drunken parties, a buzz
at

Every street-corner. As you walk by

Fingers point, people whisper: 'Look, there goes that poet

20 With the ultra-combustible heart.'

All this shameless parade of your sexual activities makes you

The talk of the whole town—and what do *you* care?

It's high time your inspiration chose a loftier model:

You've idled enough. Start on some major work.

25 Your present theme cramps your style. Try the deeds of heroes

—

A subject (you'll find) more worthy of your art.
 You've been playing at poetry—ballads for girl-adolescents,
 Juvenile stuff, the eternal *enfant terrible*.
 Now why not turn *my* way, make Roman tragedy famous,
 30 Give me the inspiration that I need?'
 With that she nodded three or four times, her scarlet buskins
 Holding her upright against the weight of her hair.
 At this point, or so I recall, a mischievous expression
 Crept over Elegy's face. (Had she got
 35 A myrtle-wand in her hand? I think so.) 'You posturing
 Windbag,' she cried, 'do you *have* to be such a bore?
 Can't you *ever* stop your pomposity? At least you
 condescended
 To attack me in elegiacs, you turned my own
 Metre against me—not that I'd ever dream of comparing
 40 Your high palatial vein with my own
 Minuscule talent. Besides, I'm frivolous, like my subject,
 And equally unheroic. All the same,
 Without me Our Lady of Passion would be plain vulgar –
 She needs my help as adviser and go-between.
 45 The door your tough buskin can't break down flies open
 At one flattering word of mine;
 Corinna took lessons from me, how to hoodwink porters
 Or spring the most foolproof lock,
 How to slip out of bed in her nightdress and move with
 unerring
 50 Feet, like a cat, through the night.
 Yet I've earned my advantage. I've beaten you by submitting
 To indignities which your pride
 Would recoil from in horror. The times I've been nailed to
 indifferent
 Front doors, for any passer-by to read!

55 Why, I even remember lying snug in a maid's bosom
 Till some crusty chaperone took off-
 Not to mention the time I was sent as a birthday present
 To that frightful girl who just tore me into shreds
 And flushed me away. It was I who awakened your dormant
 60 Poetic genius. If *she's* after you now
 It's me you should thank for it.' 'Ladies, please listen,' I told
 them
 Nervously, 'don't take offence –
 One of you honours me with sceptre and buskins: high-flown
 Utterance springs to my lips at her touch.
 65 But the other offers my passions undying glory: come then,
 Short foot and limping metre, it's you I choose!
 I'm sorry, Tragedy. Just be patient awhile. Your service
 Demands a lifetime. *Her* needs are quickly met.'
 The goddess forgave me. I'd better get on with this little
 volume
 70 While I may—my subconscious is hatching a masterpiece.

2

I don't come here to watch horses, I'm no bloodstock-fancier –
 Though of course I hope your favourite wins.
 To sit at your side and talk with you is what *I'm* after—I want
 you
 To know the havoc you've wrought in my heart.
 5 You watch the chariots, I you—that way we'll both see
 Just what we want, a feast
 For your eyes and mine alike. How lucky that charioteer is
 Who enjoys your support! How I wish
 I could be in *his* shoes—away at a flying gallop
 10 From the start of the race, flat out,
 Now a touch of the whip, now give them their head and shave
 the
 Post at the turn with my nearside wheel!

from

But if I *saw you* in mid-gallop I'd falter, the reins would drop

My hands—like that time when a spear

15 Nearly killed Pelops at Pisa, while he was gazing, besotted,

In Hippodameia's eyes, though of course

As her chosen favourite he won, just as I hope your driver

And I both manage to do.

It's no use your edging away. The seating regulations

20 Of the Circus have one advantage—they pack us close.

Hey, you on the right there, whoever you are, please remove
your elbow

From this lady's ribs, and you

In the row behind, would you mind *not* sticking your bony

Knees in her back? Sit up, sir! My sweet,

25 Your dress is brushing the ground, you really should gather

It up—no, let me. There you are. Oh dear,

What a mean old dress to keep such beautiful legs hidden!

M'm. The more one looks—what a mean old dress!

Just the sort of legs that belonged to Atalanta, that Milanion,

30 Hot on her heels, was mad to touch,

Or that painters bestow on Diana the huntress, running

With tucked-up skirts, and wilder than the wild

Beasts she pursues. But *yours*—I was hot enough when I hadn't

Seen them, and now—! It's like adding flame

35 To a bonfire, or wet to the sea. And what other treasures

May not be hidden under that summer dress?

Feeling hot? Would a cooling breeze be welcome? There, let
me

Fan you a little. Or is the heat all in my own

Too-fevered head? Is it just my romantic imagination

40 That's burned up by your girlish charms?

Oh dear—while I was talking a little dust just settled

On your white dress. Shoo, dirty dust, from so
 Spotless a body! Oh look, here comes the procession! Quiet,
 And give them a hand. The golden procession's here,
 45 Victory in the lead, with wings outspread—O Goddess,
 Hear me, and grant that my love prevail!
 Next comes Neptune. Sailors, a round of applause there!
 Me, I'm a landsman. The sea's no concern of mine.
 Ah, here's Mars—clap him, soldiers! Myself, I can't *stand*
 fighting,
 50 Peace is my thing. You know: make love not war.
 Here's Apollo for soothsayers, Artemis for hunters,
 And Minerva for craftsmen. Now,
 You countryfolk, up on your feet, give a cheer for gay Bacchus
 And Ceres! All boxers and jockeys, defer
 55 To Castor and Pollux. But *our* applause goes to amorous
 Venus, and her child with the deadly bow.
 (Help this new venture, Venus: soften up my prospective
 mistress
 Till she loves me—or anyway till she lets *me* love *her*.)
 I'm in luck—she nodded. I won't demand more of you,
 sweetheart,
 60 Than the goddess has promised already. You'll be
 (Forgive me, Venus!) a greater divinity. By these spectators,
 By the gods in procession, I swear it, I want you as mine
 For ever and ever—Oh my, your feet are dangling, why not
 Try propping them on the rail in front? They've cleared
 65 The track for the star event. Look, four-horse chariots!
 There goes the praetor's signal. They're away –
 And, yes, I can see your favourite! Anyone that you back is
 Just bound to win. Even the horses seem
 To know what you want. Oh God, he's taking that corner
 70 Far too wide—the next man's edging him out.

What are you playing at, fool? You'll disappoint the lady!

Hard on your left rein! I fear we've backed

A loser. Come on, then, everyone, wave your togas, make the

Stewards order a restart! Hold it—yes,

75 They're calling them back. Mercy, don't let all those flapping

Garments disturb your coiffure! Just lean

Close to me, I'll protect you. Look, up go the starting-gates

Again, and they're off, all in a close-packed bunch

Of different colours. Go *on*, get through that opening,

80 Don't disappoint me and my girl this time!

Bravo, he's done it, he's won! Well, love, *you're* not
disappointed –

But what about *me*? *My* prize is still to win.

She smiled, eyes bright, inviting—That'll do, now.

Keep the rest for—another place.

3

Gods exist? Don't tell me. She went back on her sworn word—
yet

Her face looks no whit less pretty than before

That act of gross perfidy, her long hair has got no shorter

Since she spat in divinity's eye. Her fair

5 Peaches-and-cream complexion is just as it was, the same
delicate

Flush warms her ivory cheek.

Those sweet little feet of hers are as tiny as ever; graceful

And tall she was—graceful and tall she remains.

Bright eyes she had—they still shine like stars. Yet how many

10 Times did the treacherous creature invoke

Them falsely to my deceit? Oh, I know the gods in heaven

Forgive a girl's lies; true beauty enjoys divine

Status as such. Why, she swore an oath only the other

Day, by the eyes of us both—but mine

15 Were the ones that suffered. Come clean, Gods—if she
bamboozled

 You with impunity, why should *I* have to pay
For another's offences? [Isn't it bad enough that you ordered
 Andromeda to be sacrificed for her mama's
Crime of excessive beauty?] Worse still, that I find you
puffball

20 Witnesses, so that she fools
Us both with a laugh, unpunished. To redeem her perjury
 Must *I* pay the price, be stuck with a double con?
Either God is a word without substance, an empty bogey
 To play on the dumb credulity of the mob,
25 Or if he exists he's besotted by girls, allows them
 Exclusive rights, *carte blanche*.

We men aren't so lucky. Mars girds on his deadly broadsword
 Against us, Pallas Athene wields her spear
In unconquered might. Against us the bow of Apollo

30 Is bent, and Jupiter poises his bolt,
Arm upflung—yet these same gods are scared of chastizing
 A pretty blasphemer, they fear
Those who don't fear *them*. Then why bother to burn incense
 On their altars? We men should display

35 More courage. Jupiter's bolts blast his own high places and
sacred

 Groves—but he's careful never to hit
A perjured lady. So many deserved it, yet only wretched
 Semele died, burnt up by her own zeal.
What, pray, would have happened if she'd resisted her lover's

40 Advances? No motherly stint for divine Papa
Delivering Bacchus. Oh, what's the point of bombarding
 The sky with complaints? Gods have eyes, have hearts –
If *I* was divine, I'd legitimize ladies' barefaced

Whoppers, let them take my godhead in vain.

45 Why, I'd even swear it was truth the little darlings were telling

I wouldn't be one of those mean old gods.

Still, darling, I'd be glad if you strained their forbearance

A little less often—or left my eyes out of it.

4

Being tough's no good, man. Guarding your girl won't help
you.

Try exploiting her feminine instincts. Remove

All restraints. If she's *still* chaste, that's genuine chastity. If she

Only holds back from compulsion, then the first

5 Chance that she gets, she'll do it. With body mewed up, her
urges

Are whorish as ever. No watchdog can stopper desire –

Or even sequester the person. Bolt each door, bar every lover,

Adultery still will lurk within.

But give her free scope, she'll get bored—with full endorsement

10 The itch for illicit affairs

Very quickly subsides. Believe me, your prohibitions

Exacerbate vice. Why not try a permissive regime?

It's far more effective. Just lately I saw a tight-reined stallion

Get the bit in his teeth and bolt

15 Like lightning—yet the minute he felt the reins slacken,

Drop loose on his flying mane,

He stopped dead. We eternally chafe at restrictions, covet

Whatever's forbidden. (Look how a sick man who's told

No immersion hangs round the bath-house.) Though Argus had
hundreds

20 Of eyes—in the back of his head, too!—yet Love

Still got past his guard single-handed. Poor Danaë was a virgin

When she entered her iron-barred turret, and then

Gave birth. Penelope had no guard, yet remained unmolested

Among all those young bucks. Desire
 25 Mounts for what's kept out of reach. A thief's attracted
 By burglar-proof premises. How often will love
 Thrive on a rival's approval? It's not your wife's beauty, but
 your own
 Passion for her that gets us—she must
 Have *something*, just to have hooked you. A girl locked up by
 her
 30 Husband's not chaste but pursued, her fear's
 A bigger draw than her figure. Illicit passion—like it
 Or not—is sweeter. It only turns me on
 When the girl says 'I'm frightened.' Not but what it's illegal
 To imprison a freeborn girl. Keep tricks like that
 35 As a sanction for aliens. Besides, do you want her warder
 To go around saying 'I did it'? Why keep
 Her chaste if a slave gets the credit? And it's so provincial
 To object to adulterous wives—a deplorable lack
 Of that *ton* for which Rome is famous. The City's founders –
 40 Romulus, Remus: Ilia's Martian twins –
 Were bastards. If all you wanted was virtue, why pick a
 beauty?
 The two things just *never* coincide.
 If you're wise, you'll play up to her. Stop pulling damnable
 faces,
 Don't stand on your marital rights.
 45 She'll bring you scads of good friends: take care to cultivate
 them –
 A minimal effort, a substantial return:
 Freedom for you to drink with the boys, while endless
 Presents—from others—greet your eye at home.

'Darkness, sleep drowning my weary eyes—and then a
 nightmare

That scared me silly. This was the way of it:
Picture a sunlit hillside, with thick-clustering ilex
On its lower slopes, and birds
5 Everywhere in the treetops, a grassy meadow beyond, and
One lush green overgrown spot
With a *drip-drip-drip* of water. It was hot. I sought shelter
under
Those leafy branches—yet even there the heat
Oppressed me still. Then, suddenly, a white heifer
10 Came into sight, cropping the flowery grass,
Whiter than fresh-fallen snowdrifts, before they've melted
To wet slush, whiter than sheep's
Milk as it hisses and froths in the bucket at milking-time
Straight from the udder. A bull,
15 Her privileged mate, was with her, and settled down on
The meadow-grass by her side:
Lay there, ruminant, slowly chewing the grassy
Cud as it rose in his throat, till I saw
Him begin to nod, and sleepily lower that great horned
20 Head to the ground.
Then a carrion-crow swooped down on widespread pinions
And sat cawing there in the grass:
Three times, with mischievous beak, it pecked at the heifer's
Breast, and tore out a snow-
25 White tuft. The heifer at last abandoned bull and meadow,
A livid bruise on her throat,
And seeing other bulls at pasture in the distance,
Bulls in the distance, and fine
Pasturage to be had, moved over and joined them,
30 In quest of more fertile fields,
A richer diet. So tell me, my unseen expounder
Of dreams (if such dreams do have significance), what

Does mine portend?’

The interpreter pondered on all I’d told
him,

Then answered: ‘That heat you tried

35 To escape from by sheltering under the breeze-stirred branches,
Yet in vain, was the heat of desire.

The heifer stood for your girl—white, a most appropriate
colour –

The bull, her companion, was you.

The sharp-beaked crow that pecked at her breast was some
elderly

40 Bawd fast-talking her into another affair.

Just as the heifer, at last, after long hesitation,

Left her bull, so you too will be left

Alone in your own cold bed. The bruise on her breast bears
witness

To the stain of adultery.’

45 There His interpretation ended. At those words the blood
ran freezing

From my face, and the world went black before my
eyes.

6

Reed-choked and muddy river, would you please mind
stopping

Your flow for a moment? I’m late

For a date with my girl. There’s no bridge, no cable-ferry

To get me across without oars.

5 I remember you as a shallow stream, easily fordable, only

Just deep enough to wet

My ankles—but look at you now, all swollen with melted

Mountain snow, turbid, whirling down in spate!

What was the point of my hurrying? Why did I ever bother

10 To go without sleep, to travel on night and day

If I've still got to waste time here, if I can't think up any

Ingenious method of reaching the far bank?

If only I had winged sandals, like Danaë's heroic

Son Perseus, when he cut off Medusa's head

15 With its crawling coiffure of snakes, or that airborne chariot

From which the first seed-corn fell

On earth's virgin soil! (All lies, old poetic nonsense

That never really happened—and never will.)

Look, river, your banks are capacious enough—why don't you

20 Stay within them? (So may you flow

For ever!) Believe me, if it gets known that you held up

Me, a poet in love, then your name

Will stink to high heaven. Why, rivers should help young
lovers –

Rivers know all about love themselves.

25 Inachus pined, we're told, for Melia the Bithynian –

At her touch, his icy shallows thawed.

While Troy still stood her siege, Xanthus was dazzled

By Neaera's beauty. And wasn't it true love

For Arcadian Arethusa that drove Alpheus underseas to

30 Syracuse? Think of Creüsa, betrothed

To another, but ravished away and hidden in Phthiotis

By Peneus—or so they say. Why should I tell

The tale of how Mars' daughter Thebe caught Asopus'

Fancy—and bore him five girls in a row?

35 Where are your horns, Acheloüs? Broken off in a fury

By Heracles' strong right arm:

Not for all Calydon, all Aetolia would he have done it,

But Deianeira—alone—was worth the lot.

Rich Nile, who hides so well the region of his rising,

40 Whose waters flow seaward through

Those seven wide mouths, is said to have nursed for Evanthe,

Asopus' daughter, a flame his own mighty flood
Could never extinguish. Enipeus, red-hot to embrace Salmonis
Without getting her wet, said *Back!*

45 To his waters—and back they went. Then there's Anio, tumbling
Down through rocks amid Tibur's orchards—he
Lost his heart to Ilia, didn't mind her unkempt appearance,
The grief-stricken way she tore at her cheeks
And hair as she wandered barefoot through the wilderness,
mourning

50 Mars' lust, and her uncle's crime.
At the sight of her swift-flowing Anio's head surged upward
From his loud midwaters, and thus
He spoke: 'Oh why do you pace my bank so forlornly, Ilia,
Daughter of Ilium's royal line?

55 Why must you wander alone, your finery discarded,
Hair falling down your back, no white
Ribbon to bind it? Why are you crying, why in such frenzy
Beating your naked breast?

The man who could look on your tears and feel no pity must
have a

60 Heart compounded of iron and flint.
Ilia, don't be afraid. My palace is ready for you, my waters
Will do you honour. Ilia, don't be afraid.

A hundred nymphs and more you shall have to attend you—a
hundred

And more my streams contain.

65 Don't reject me, not that, I beseech you, dear Trojan lady –
Say "Yes" and you'll reap a still richer reward
Than all I have promised.'

She kept her eyes modestly lowered,
Warm tears soaking her bosom. Three times she tried
To escape from those mighty waters, but found herself

powerless,

70 Frozen with fear. Then, at last,
 Hands clutching her hair, voice tremulous, she somehow
 Broke into bitter words: 'O that my bones
 Had been gathered and laid to rest in the tomb of my
ancestors

 While I was a virgin still! Ah why
75 This offer of marriage? My vows, I broke my vows as a Vestal

—
 Whorish, unclean. No right to the sacred fire.
 Why linger, a butt for cheap pointing fingers? The brand of
 Shame is on my face: so, wipe it out!
 With that she raised up her robe before her swollen
80 Eyes, and hurled herself into the swift
 Flood, but the lubricous River, it's said, swam his hands up
 Under her breasts, and bedded her as his Queen.
 Has some girl warmed *you* up, too? I suppose it's just credible

—
 This woodland greenery would make a fine
85 Camouflage for such crimes.

 Your stream (I declare)
has widened
 While I've been talking! Those banks
 Aren't deep enough to contain it. What's your grudge against
me, though?

 Why interrupt my journey, postpone the joys
 Of a lovers' meeting? If only you were a proper river,
90 Well-known internationally, on the map,
 And not this anonymous product of *ad hoc* drainage,
 With no settled source or route,
 Dependent instead upon flash floods and melting snows, the
 Largesse that dull winter bestows!

95 If it's winter you're muddy-turbulent; then, come summer,
 A desert of stones and dust.
What traveller ever slaked thirst *in your* waters, or wished you
 Long life, a perennial flow?
In spate you're a menace to fields and cattle—though that's a
problem
100 For others, not me; I'm more concerned with my own
Troubles. I must have been crazy, telling you tales of rivers
 That fell in love, dropping the names
Of Inachus, Acheloüs, Nile and the rest of them
 To a no-name dribble like you!
105 May you get what you deserve, you fouled-up torrent –
 Heatwave all summer, and in winter, drought!

7

I can't fault the girl on looks, or style, or sophistication –
 And I'd tried for her often enough. *But*
There we lay, in bed, embracing, and all to no purpose:
 I was limp, disgusting, dead.
5 Heaven knows I wanted it badly, and so did my partner,
 But still I failed to measure up.
She tried every trick—wound her arms (whiter than snow or
 Ivory) around me, pressed
Her thighs up snug under mine, plied me with sexy kisses,
10 Tongue exploring like mad,
Whispered endearments, called me her master, tried me
 With nice four-letter words—they often help.
No good. My member hung slack, as though frozen by
hemlock,
 A dead loss for the sort of game I'd planned.
15 There I lay, a sham, a deadweight, a trunk of inert matter,
 Not even sure if I was alive, or a ghost.
What sort of old age shall I have (if I ever reach it)

When I can't make out as a youth?

I'm ashamed, at my age. Little good in being young and virile

20 If as far as *she* could tell

I was neither. She left my bed with sisterly decorum,

Pure as a Vestal off to tend

The sacred flame. But it's not all that long since I made it

Twice with that smart Greek blonde, three times

25 With a couple of other beauties—and as for Corinna,

In one short night, I remember, she made me perform

Nine times, no less. Perhaps some Thessalian hell-brew has
ruined

My physical urges, maybe I'm a victim of spells

And herbal concoctions. Perhaps some witch is busy
transfixing

30 My image, and name, in red wax,

Sticking pins through my liver. Magic spells can transform
wheatfields

Into barren tares, can dry up springs at source,

Charm acorns off oaks, grapes from vines, strip orchards bare
of

Their fruit without human aid—so what's to stop

35 Some magician giving my member a local anaesthetic?

Maybe *that* was the trouble, made worse

By embarrassment when I couldn't, the final humiliating

Blow to my masculine pride.

Such a marvellous girl—her own dress couldn't cling closer

40 Than I did to her: I eyed her, touched her, but that

Was as far as it went. Put Nestor in my position,

Tithonus even, and despite their decrepitude

They'd rise to the test like boys. I'd the chance to possess her,

But she got no deal. What can I pray for now?

45 I'm sure the gods must regret the gift with which they
endowed me –

Just look at the way I've messed it up! I got
 Everything that I hoped for, an enthusiastic welcome,
 Kisses, the girl on her own: yet where
 Did all my good fortune take me? What's ownership minus
 50 Possession? To leave such wealth intact
 Was a trick fit for misers. I lay there like Tantalus, parching
 Because of his indiscretion, eyes on the fruit
 That always hung just out of reach. I mean, one just *doesn't*
 Get up simon-pure after a night with a girl –
 55 And it's not that she wasn't seductive, just think of those
 marvellous
 Kisses she wasted on me, the tricks she tried!
 She could have shifted an oak-tree, broken hard adamant,
 Worked up unfeeling stones:
 A living, virile partner, for her, was a pushover—but just then
 60 I lacked both virility and life.
 What joy can a blind man get from a painted picture?
 What's the use of a singer performing for the deaf?
 I imagined every variety of erotic pleasure, invented
 No end of positions—in my head –
 65 But still my member lay there, an embarrassing case of
 Premature death, and limper than yesterday's rose.
 Yet *now*—what perverse timing!—just look at it, stiff and urgent,
 Eager to go campaigning, get on the job.
 (Oh why can't you lie down? I'm ashamed of you, you bastard
 –
 70 I've been caught by your promises before.
 You let me down, it was *your* fault I landed weaponless
 In this embarrassing and expensive fix.)
 My girl tried everything, even some gentle massage
 Of the offending part –
 75 Yet *still* it wouldn't come up. All her varied resources

(She saw) left it quite unmoved.

Then she really got mad. 'You're sick,' she told me. 'Stop
wasting

My time. Who sent you along

To gatecrash my bed? Look, either some witch has hexed you

80 Or you've just been making love with another girl.'

That did it. She jumped out of bed, her nightdress flying, with

a

Delectable flash of bare feet,

And to stop her maids from guessing nothing had happened

Splashed around with some water—as though it had.

8

Does anyone nowadays look up with admiration

At the liberal arts, or believe

Love-elegies rate a dowry? Time was when poetic talent

Came dearer than gold, but today

5 To lack cash is plain vulgar. When my poems please my
mistress

They can go in where *I* can't.

A few pretty compliments, and the front door slams behind me

—

Me, genius, out in the cold,

Traipsing round like a fool, replaced by some new-rich soldier,

10 A bloody oaf who slashed his way to the cash

And a knighthood. Darling, how could you *bear* to embrace
him

With those exquisite arms—much less let *him* hug *you*?

That headpiece (let me remind you) once wore a helmet, those
loins

That serve you were strapped with a sword,

15 On the left hand a knight's gold ring, new, inappropriate,

Replaces a shield. The right —

Yes, touch it—has shed men's blood. Can you hold hands with

a killer?

Whatever became of your tender heart?

Just look at his scars, mementoes of old battles –

20 That body earned him all he's got.

Maybe he'll even tell you how many human carcasses

He's butchered. Such give-away hands

Surely choke your gold-digging instincts? Yet I, pure priest of
the Muses

And Apollo, declaim in vain to a locked door.

25 If you want to be with it, don't learn what we layabouts
know, but

Train as a front-line soldier, rough it in camp:

Make centurion, don't make good verses. A spot of active
service

And Homer would qualify for a classy lay.

When Jupiter realized gold's sovereign potency, presto,

30 He coined himself to raise

The price of a quick seduction. Without the profit motive

Father was adamant, the girl a prude,

Her tower of iron brass-bolted. But when this smart seducer

Cashed down on her, crying 'Give!'

35 She gave with a will. When old Saturn ruled in heaven

Earth's wealth lay deep underground

Where he'd stored it away—bronze, silver, gold, and the
ponderous

Weight of cold iron. Ingots were still unknown.

Yet Earth had better to offer—crops without husbandry,

40 Fruit there for the picking, honey in hollow oaks;

No ploughshares to break up the landscape, no surveyors

Pegging out the boundaries of estates,

No oars to churn up the seaways—men travelled no further

Than the shoreline in those days.

45 Ingenious human nature, scintillatingly self-destructive,

So clever you cut yourself—what
 Use is it ringing your cities with turreted fortifications?
 Why stir up enemies to fight?
 Was the sea your domain? Best have stuck to *terra firma*:
 50 Why not stake out a third realm, in the sky?
 (Though as far as you can you *do* reach heavenwards:
 Bacchus,
 Hercules, Romulus, and now Caesar too
 All have their temples.) Today we dig the earth, not for
 produce
 But for solid gold. Soldiers get wealth through blood,
 55 And not their own, either. The Senate's barred to a pauper,
 Income grades honours. Thus, the grave judge;
 Thus, the stern knight. Let them own the lot, Campus and
 Forum
 At their command, theirs to decide
 For peace or brute war—so long as they don't bid up the prices
 60 On our lovers, so long as they leave
 The poor man his bone, it's enough. As things are, were my
 girl as prudish
 Chaste as a Sabine, Sugar-Daddy still calls the shots.
 So the porter won't let me in, and she's scared (she says) of
 her husband
 When I'm around. But if I could *pay* those two
 65 They'd leave us the house to ourselves. Why can't neglected
 lovers
 Have their own god, who'd turn ill-gotten gains to dust?

9

If Memnon's mother, if the mother of great Achilles
 Lamented their sons, if grievous death
 Can touch high goddesses, then, O Elegy—all too truly
 Now named for sorrow—unbind your hair
 5 And weep tears of loss. Tibullus, your pride, your laureate

poet

Lies on the high pyre, a husk
Winnowed by flame. Cupid's there, quiver reversed, bow
broken,

Holding a burnt-out torch.
See how sadly he walks, poor child, wings drooping,
10 How he beats at his bared breast,
How the tears rain down on his hair, now lying all tangled
About his throat, and his mouth's a loud O of grief.
Thus he looked, they say, long ago, when he saw his brother
Aeneas to the grave
15 From Iulus' palace. Venus is mourning too, the death of
Tibullus has hit her as hard.

As the boar-tush that gashed the groin of young Adonis. We
poets

Are called sacred, beloved of the gods—by some
Even divinely inspired. But importunate Death profanes all
that's

20 Sacred, lays obscure hands
On each mortal alike. What good were divine parents to
Orpheus?

Could the songs that spellbound beasts
Save even him? His father Apollo sang 'Woe for Linos!'
(They say) in the wild woods

25 To a reluctant lyre. Great Homer, perennial well-spring
Of inspiration for poets, one day sank
Under hell's black waters, drowned in eternity. Only
Songs, spells, escape the greedy flame,

Only the poet's work endures, the tale of that Trojan
30 High endeavour, the nightly guile
That unwove an immortal web. Thus Delia, thus Nemesis,
Old love and new, are assured of lasting fame.

Did religion give them as much? What use, now, those

Rattles, those nights of chaste solitude? When
35 Good men die untimely I'm tempted—forgive my bluntness –
To deny that the gods exist. A holy life
Is still closed by death. The most pious of worshippers
Will yet be dragged from his temple to the grave.
Is creative magic your touchstone? Look, there lies Tibullus,
40 Great talent rendered down
To an urnful of ashes. Did flames devour *your* body, poet,
Make bold to feed on *your* heart?
Such blasphemous fire would scarcely have balked at
burning
The gilded temples of the gods.
45 Venus, Queen of high Eryx, averted her countenance, shed sad
Tears, it is said, despite herself.
Still, better this way. Suppose you had died, still unknown, of
that illness
Long ago on Corfu, had mouldered in some cheap
grave?
Here, your swimming eyes were closed, as the spirit fled them,
50 By a mother's hand. She paid
Your ashes the final rites, with your sister as fellow-mourner
Tearing unkempt hair. Next-of-kin
Kisses mingled with those of Nemesis and your previous
Mistress—you weren't left to burn away alone.
55 Stepping down from the pyre, 'I was lucky in love,' said Delia,
'The spark I kindled in you
Spelt life.' 'No, the loss is mine,' cried Nemesis. 'Why should
you feel
Sorrow? It was me he clung to as he died.'
Yet if human survival means more than a ghostly reputation,
60 Tibullus must surely dwell in Elysium,
Welcomed by young Catullus, ivy-garlanded, poet and scholar,

With his Calvus, and perhaps (should that charge
Of friendship dishonoured prove false) you too, Gallus, over-
lavish

Of your own blood, your dear life.

65 With these, if some ghostly substance survive the body, your
ghost will

Be numbered, an elegant newcomer to the ranks
Of the blessed dead. May your bones rest undisturbed in their
guardian

Urn, I pray, and on your ashes the earth lie light.

10

High summer has brought round Ceres' yearly festival
And my darling lies alone in her empty bed.
Flaxen Ceres, your fine hair wreathed with wheat-ears, why
must

Your rites inhibit our fun?

5 People the wide world over extol your munificence, Lady:

No other goddess lavishes more on mankind.

In earlier times a hirsute and ignorant peasantry never
Parched corn, hadn't heard
About threshing-floors. Oak-trees, those primitive oracles,
yielded

10 Them acorns: acorns and herbs

Made up their diet. Ceres first taught the seed to ripen

In the furrow, first scythed

The golden cornstalks, broke ox to yoke, drove ploughshare

Through virgin soil. Can *this*

15 Be a goddess who battens on lovers' sorrows, finds proper
worship

In the torment of sexless nights?

Yet though fertile fields are her special delight, she's no simple

Rustic herself—nor is her heart untouched

By love, as the Cretans will tell you—and not *everything* Cretans

20 Say is a lie. Why, Crete once stood proud nurse
 To Jove himself: there he, who sways the starry vault of
 Heaven, sucked milk
 As a newborn babe. Unimpeachable evidence, evidence
 backed by
 Crete's foster-son: Ceres should plead
 25 Guilty. The facts are well-known. Out on the slopes of Ida
 She met with that keen
 Marksman lasius hunting. Fire coursed through her marrow,
 Passion and shame at odds. But shame
 Lost out to passion. Oh, then you could see the furrows
 30 Turn barren-dry, then seed
 Yielded a meagre harvest. Though labourers had sweated
 With mattocks and crooked share
 To crack those recalcitrant clods, though the seed was
 broadcast
 Field-wide and even, their hopes
 35 Went all for nothing. Thicket-deep the goddess of increase
 In dalliance lay, the wheatspike wreath
 Tumbled from her long tresses. Only Crete enjoyed fruitfulness
 That year. Wherever she came was harvest-home –
 Crops rioted amid the very forests of Ida, wild boar
 40 Trampled spelt in the woods.
 Minos the law-giver prayed for more such seasons: better
 He had prayed for Ceres' love to last.
 Just because lonely nights were hell for you, dear golden
 Goddess, why put *me* through the same
 45 Torture during your festival? Why should I be sad? Your
 daughter's
 Found again, and now queens it over a realm
 Second only to Juno's. This festive day calls for wine, for love-
 making
 And song—what fitter tribute to all-powerful gods?

I've stood enough, for too long. Heart and patience are both exhausted

By this fickle obsession. So—*out*!

That's right, I've slipped the chain, achieved emancipation,
Can blush—now—for what I once

5 Bore so unblushingly. Triumph: passion spurned and trodden
Under my feet. A tardy access of horn-
Stiff will. Keep it up, stand firm. Such suffering's bound to
Pay off in the end. Nasty medicine does you good.
How *could* I have swallowed such insults? The times I was
driven

10 Away from your door, to grovel on the bare
Pavement—*me*, a gentleman! The times I stood guard, slave-
like,

Outside your shuttered house (while you
Made love to God knows who) and was forced to watch your
lover

Lurch home exhausted, done in!

15 Yet even this hurt less than *him* seeing *me*—I could wish my
Bitterest enemy no worse a fate.

Was there ever a day when I failed to act as your personal
Watchdog, companion, shadow, lover, friend?

And wasn't it our relationship made you a public sweetheart,

20 One love-affair generating so many more?

Why remind you of all your sordid lies, those broken

Promises, worthless oaths

You swore to my undoing, the young men who gave you
private

Signals at parties, coded exchanges? 'She's sick,'

25 They told me: at once I hurried back like a madman, found
you

The picture of health—and in my rival's arms.

Such incidents (there were others I'd sooner omit) have
hardened

My heart at long last. So go find

Some other more willing victim. My vessel lies safe in
harbour,

30 Garlanded, indifferent to the swelling storm outside.
Leave off your blandishments. The old line's lost its magic
Hold on my senses. I'm not the fool I was.

11B

My capricious heart's a cockpit for conflicting emotions,

Love versus hate—but love, I think, will win.

I'll hate if I can. If not, I'll play the reluctant lover:

No ox loves the yoke—he's just stuck with what he hates.

5 A fugitive from your vices, I'm lured back by your beauty:

Your morals turn me off, your body on.

So I can live neither with nor without you, I don't seem

To know my own mind. I wish you were

Either less beautiful or more faithful: such a good figure

10 Doesn't go with your bad ways.

The facts demand censure, the face begs for love—and gets it,

Eclipsing (to my cost) its owner's crimes.

By the bed we shared, by all those gods who so often

Let you take their names in vain,

15 By your face, that image for me of high divinity,

By those eyes which captivated mine,

Spare me! And mine you'll always remain, whatever your
nature;

Just choose—would you rather I loved

Freely or by constraint? Let me spread sail, cruise with a
following

20 Breeze—make me want what I can't resist!

What day was it, birds of ill omen, that you croaked your

portents

Above this eternally love-struck head of mine?

What unlucky star has crossed me, what gods are planning

My downfall? That girl whom the town

5 Spoke of–till lately–as *mine*, my solitary obsession,

I fear I must now share

With all comers. Could my poems have made her a public
figure?

That's it: *she* was prostituted by *my* art,

And serve me right for trumpeting her beauty abroad! If my
darling's

10 On the market, it's all my fault –

I've pimped her charms, I've marked up the route for lovers,

It was I who let them in at her front door.

What good have my poems done me? They've brought nothing
but trouble,

Made men envy my success.

15 Thebes could have been my theme, or Troy, or Caesar's
exploits,

But only Corinna sparked me off.

Why couldn't the Muse, and Apollo, have withheld their
inspiration

When I first turned my hand to verse?

Yet poets' statements aren't normally taken as gospel—I never

20 Meant such light stuff to carry weight.

Myth's more our field. We created Scylla, who raped her
father's

Lock, and keeps packs of mad

Dogs in her groin and womb. We snaked up Medusa's
hairstyle,

Winged Hermes' heels, gave Perseus his flying horse,

25 Stretched Tityos the giant till he covered nine acres, found
three

Heads for dragon-tailed Cerberus, made

Enceladus, windmilling spears with his thousand arms; drew
heroes

Ravished by Siren voices, shut the winds
Of Aeolus in a wineskin for Odysseus, worked the water-
torture

30 On treacherous Tantalus—a thirst
For ever unsatisfied—turned Niobe to flint, made Callisto a she-
bear,

Philomela a nightingale,
Let Jupiter masquerade in feathers or showers of gold, or
Swim off as an ocean bull

35 With some hapless virgin up. Then there's Proteus, and the
Theban

Sown teeth of the dragon, those oxen snorting fire,
Phaëthon's sisters weeping amber tears, sea-goddesses

Conjured from ships, the sun
Wheeling back in the heavens at sight of Thyestes' ghastly

40 Cannibal feast, rocks bouncing along in the wake
Of strumming Amphion—oh, creative poetic licence
Is boundless, and unconstrained

By historical fact. You ought / to have taken my praise of
Corinna

As fiction. Now *your* credulity's done *me* harm!

13

We had come to Falerii—good orchard land: once captured by
Camillus:

And (the why of our visit) my wife's home-town.
Priestesses were busy with Juno's chaste festival—sacrifice
Of a local heifer: crowded games.

5 Despite an exhausting journey over mountain roads, to witness
This ritual more than made up for the delay.

There stood the goddess's grove, dark-shadowed, immemorial

One step inside, and you know
 That some spirit haunts the place. There's a rough old altar
 10 Where worshippers burn incense, mutter a prayer.
 Hither, through garlanded streets, with solemn chanting
 To the skirl of flutes, and cheers
 From the bystanders, comes a once-yearly procession, leading
 snow-white
 Heifers, sleek on Falerian pasture, young
 15 Calves with no lowering menace—as yet—abud in their
 foreheads,
 Humble pigs from the sty (placate
 God at cut rates) and old / bell-wethers with backward-
 curving
 Horns on their bony skulls. Only the goat
 Is banned, as Juno's *bête noire*. When she fled Jove, and sought
 shelter
 20 Deep in the forest, a goat's bleat gave her away.
 So to this day little children still throw spears at the tattler,
 And whoever scores first wins
 A nannygoat prize. Ahead of the goddess walk youths and shy
 maidens,
 Skirts sweeping the broad street,
 25 The girls' hair all entwined with gold and jewels, gilded
 Shoes peeping out from beneath
 Ceremonial mantles. Veiled, white-robed in the ancestral
 Greek fashion, they bear on their heads
 The sacred vessels. Then the crowd hushes in reverence
 30 As Juno herself goes past on a gilded float
 Drawn by her priestesses. The ritual came from Argos:
 On Agamemnon's murder Halaesus fled
 The scene of the crime, fled his heritage: after long
 wanderings
 By land and sea, he founded these city-walls

35 And taught his prosperous burghers the worship of Juno.

Lady, look kindly always on me, on them.

14

I don't ask that you should be faithful, you're far too attractive:

I'd just prefer *not* to know about your affairs –

So depressing. My principles aren't based on exclusive possession,

But they *do* require some attempt

5 To cover one's tracks. Any girl who can swear she didn't,

Didn't. Only admission ruins her name.

What lunacy to expose nocturnal business in daylight

And broadcast one's private acts! Even a tart

About to perform with some nameless gentleman keeps the public

10 Outside by bolting her door

Before they begin—whereas *you* feed gossip succulent titbits

Of scandal, turn informer on your own misdeeds.

Show a little more decency (or at least pretend to): then I

Can think you faithful even when you're not.

15 Keep on with your present *Me, just don't admit it*. A modest

Persona, in public, shouldn't prove too bad

An embarrassment. Impropriety has its special off-limits

Enclave, where every kind of fun is the rule

And restraints are unheard-of. But the moment you walk out, drop all

20 Wanton behaviour. Keep your misconduct for bed,

Where stripping off need occasion no embarrassment, nor the

Twining of thigh over thigh:

The proving-ground for countless varieties of passion,

Tongue thrust between cherry-ripe lips,

25 Non-stop whispered endearments, ecstatic moans, the bedstead

Shaking away like mad:

But reassume, with your clothes, a highly respectable expression.

A virtuous air which abjures the very thought
Of illicit sex. Lay them all, but allay my suspicions, leave me
30 In ignorance, let me cling
To my foolish illusions. All those to-and-fro notes—need I see
them?

Couldn't you even smooth out the bed
Or tidy your hair? (That degree of dishevelment takes more
Than sleeping alone.) *Must* you flaunt the bites
35 On your neck? All you draw the line at is doing it in my
presence –

If you don't care for your good name, please think of
me!

Each time you confess a liaison it kills me by inches, my
reason

Blanks out, I'm covered in a cold sweat.
Then love's overlaid by vain hatred for what I can't help
loving,

40 Then I wish I were dead—with you.

I'll make no inquiries, won't probe into your secrets:

Self-deception will be my official line.

But if ever you're caught in the act, if I actually witness

Your shameful conduct with my own eyes,

45 Make sure you contradict the evidence of my senses,

And then I'll accept your word

Against what I saw. No trouble in defeating a would-be loser –

Just let your tongue

Remember that phrase 'Not guilty'. Two words will free you.
Your case may

50 Be weak—but then so is your judge!

Mother of tender loves, you must find another poet:

My elegies are homing on their final lap.

Postscript concerning the author: of Paelignian extraction,

A man whose delights have never let him down,

5 Heir—for what that's worth—to an ancient family,

No brand-new knight jumped up

Virgil, Through the maelstrom fortunes of war. Mantua boasts her

The Veronese their Catullus. *I* shall become the pride

Of my fellow-Paelignians—a race who fought for freedom,

10 Freedom with honour, in the Italian wars

That scared Rome witless. I can see some visitor to Sulmona

Taking in its tiny scale, the streams and walls,

so And saying: 'Any township, however small, that could breed

Splendid a poet, I call great.' Boy-god,

15 And you, Cyprian goddess, his mother, remove your golden

Standards from my terrain –

Horned Bacchus is goading me on to weightier efforts, bigger

Horses, a really ambitious trip.

So farewell, congenial Muse, unheroic elegiacs –

Work born to live on when its maker's dead!

THE ART OF LOVE

BOOK 1

Should anyone here in Rome lack finesse at love-making, let
him

Try me—read my book, and results are guaranteed!

Technique is the secret. Charioteer, sailor, oarsman,

All need it. Technique can control

5 Love himself. As Automedon was charioteer to Achilles,

And Tiphys Jason's steersman, so I,

By Venus' appointment, am made Love's artificer, shall be
known as

The Tiphys, the very Automedon of Love.

He's a wild handful, will often rebel against me,

10 But still just a child –

Malleable, easily disciplined. Chiron made young Achilles

A fine musician, hammered that fierce heart

On the anvil of peaceful artistry. So this future terror

To friend and foe alike went in awe, it's said,

15 Of his elderly teacher, at whose bidding the hand that in after-

Time bore down Hector was held out for the tawse.

As Chiron taught Achilles, so I am Love's preceptor:

Wild boys both, both goddess-born—and yet

Even bulls can be broken to plough, or spirited horses

20 Subdued with bridle and bit.

So Love shall likewise own my mastery, though his bowshots

Skewer my breast, though his torch

Flicker and sear me. The worse the wounds, the deeper the
branding,

That much keener I to avenge

25 Such outrage. Nor shall I falsely ascribe my arts to Apollo:

No airy bird comes twittering advice

Into *my* ear, *I* never had a vision of the Muses

Herding sheep in Ascra's valleys. This work is based
On experience: what I write, believe me, I have practised.

30 My poem will deal in truth.

Aid my enterprise, Venus! Respectable ladies, the kind who

Wear hairbands and ankle-length skirts,

Are hereby warned off. Safe love, legitimate liaisons

Will be my theme. This poem breaks no taboos.

35 First, then, you fledgling troopers in passion's service,

Comes the task of finding an object for your love.

Next, you must labour to woo and win your lady;

Thirdly, ensure that the affair will last.

Such are my limitations, such the ground I will cover,

40 The race I propose to run.

While you are fancy-free still, and can drive at leisure,

Pick a girl, tell her, 'You're the one I love.

And only you.' But this search means using your eyes: a
mistress

Won't drop out of the sky at your feet.

45 A hunter's skilled where to spread his nets for the stag, senses

In which glen the wild boar lurks.

A fowler's familiar with copses, an expert angler

Knows the richest shoaling-grounds for fish.

You too, so keen to establish some long-term relationship,

50 Must learn, first, where girl is to be found.

Your search need not take you—believe me—on an overseas
voyage:

A short enough trek will bring you to your goal.

True, Perseus fetched home Andromeda from the coloured
Indies,

While Phrygian Paris abducted Helen in Greece,

55 But Rome can boast of so many and such dazzling beauties

You'd swear the whole world's talent was gathered

here.

The girls of your city outnumber Gargara's wheatsheaves,
Methymna's grape-clusters, all
Birds on the bough, stars in the sky, fish in the ocean:

- 60 Venus indeed still haunts
Her son Aeneas' foundation. If you like budding adolescents
Any number of (guaranteed) maidens are here to
delight
Your roving eye. You prefer young women? They'll charm you
By the thousand, you won't know which to choose.
- 65 And if you happen to fancy a more mature, experienced
Age-group, believe me, *they* show up in droves.
Here's what to do. When the sun's on the back of Hercules'
Lion, stroll down some shady colonnade,
Pompey's, say, or Octavia's (for her dead son Marcellus:
70 Extravagant marble facings, R.I.P.),
Or Livia's, with its gallery of genuine Old Masters,
Or the Danaids' Portico (note
The artwork: Danaus' daughters plotting mischief for their
cousins,
Father attitudinizing with drawn sword).
- 75 Don't miss the shrine of Adonis, mourned by Venus,
Or the synagogue—Syrian Jews
Worship there each Sabbath—or the linen-clad heifer-goddess's
Memphian temple: Io makes many a maid what *she*
Was to Jove. The very courts are hunting-grounds for passion;
80 Amid lawyers' rebuttals love will often be found.
Here, where under Venus' marble temple the Appian
Fountain pulses its jets high in the air,
Your jurisconsult's entrapped by Love's beguilements –
Counsel to others, he cannot advise himself.
- 85 Here, all too often, words fail the most eloquent pleader,

And a new sort of case comes on—his own. He must
Defend *himself* for a change, while Venus in her nearby
Temple snickers at this reversal of roles.

But the theatre's curving tiers should form your favourite

90 Hunting-ground: here you are sure to find
The richest returns, be your wish for lover or playmate,
A one-night stand or a permanent affair.
As ants hurry to and fro in column, mandibles
Clutching grains of wheat

95 (Their regular diet), as bees haunt fragrant pastures
And meadows, hovering over the thyme,
Flitting from flower to flower, so our fashionable ladies
Swarm to the games in such crowds, I often can't
Decide which I like. As spectators they come, come to be
inspected:

100 Chaste modesty doesn't stand a chance.
Such incidents at the games go back to Romulus –
Men without women, Sabine rape.
No marble theatre then, no awnings, no perfumed saffron
To spray the stage red:

105 The Palatine woods supplied a leafy backdrop (nature's
Scenery, untouched by art),
While the tiers of seats were plain turf, and spectators shaded
Their shaggy heads with leaves.

Urgently brooding in silence, the men kept glancing

110 About them, each marking his choice
Among the girls. To the skirl of Etruscan flutes' rough triple
Rhythm, the dancers stamped

And turned. Amid cheers (applause then lacked
discrimination)

The king gave the sign for which

115 They'd so eagerly watched. Project Rape was on. Up they

sprang then

With a lusty roar, laid hot hands on the girls.

As timorous doves flee eagles, as a lambkin

Runs when it sees the hated wolf,

So this wild charge of men left the girls all panic-stricken,

120 Not one had the same colour in her cheeks as before –

The same nightmare for all, though terror's features varied:

Some tore their hair, some just froze

Where they sat; some, dismayed, kept silence, others vainly

Yelled for Mamma; some wailed; some gaped;

125 Some fled, some just stood there. So they were carried off as

Marriage-bed plunder; even so, many contrived

To make panic look fetching. Any girl who resisted her
pursuer

Too vigorously would find herself picked up

And borne off regardless. 'Why spoil those pretty eyes with
weeping?'

130 She'd hear, 'I'll be all to you

That your Dad ever was to your Mum.' (You alone found the
proper

Bounty for soldiers, Romulus: give me that,

And I'll join up myself.) Ever since that day, by hallowed
custom,

Our theatres have always held dangers for pretty girls.

135 Don't forget the races, either: the spacious Circus offers

Chances galore. No need,

Here, of private finger-talk, or secret signals,

Nods conveying messages: you'll sit

Right beside your mistress, without let or hindrance,

140 So be sure to press against her wherever you can –

An easy task: the seating-divisions restrict her,

Regulations facilitate contact. Now find

Some excuse to engage in friendly conversation,

Casual small-talk at first –

- 145 Ask, with a show of interest, whose are those horses
Just coming past: find out
Her favourite, back it yourself. When the long procession of
ivory
Deities approaches, be sure you give
A big hand to Lady Venus. If some dust should settle
150 In your girl's lap, flick it away
With your fingers; and if there's no dust, still flick away–
nothing:
Let any excuse serve to prove your zeal.
If her cloak's trailing, gather it up, make a great business
Of rescuing it from the dirt –
155 Instant reward for your gallantry, a licensed peep at
Delectable ankles, and more.
Keep an eye on whoever may be sitting behind you,
Don't let him rub his knee
Against her smooth back. Light minds are captivated by trifles:
160 Plumping out a cushion can often help,
Or fanning the lady, or slipping a little footstool
Under her dainty feet.
Such approaches will the Circus afford to a new courtship,
Such, too, the crowded forum with its grim
165 Sanded arena, where Cupid's a regular contestant,
Where the blood-and-guts fancier gets bloodied himself:
While he's chatting, and touching her hand, and checking the
programme,
And anxious (once he's placed his bet) to know
Which contestant will win, the winged steel has transfixed
him,
170 He groans at the wound, becomes part
Of the show he was watching. When Caesar lately staged that

Naval mock-battle between Persians and Greeks,

Young men and girls converged from east coast and west, the
whole wide

World was packed into Rome –

175 With such a throng, who could fail to find what caught his
fancy?

Many a man was singed by some foreign flame!

Now Caesar is planning to fill in the final gaps of

Empire: now the furthest East will be ours,

Revenge fall on Parthia, joy lighten the grave of Crassus,

180 Redeem the standards profaned

By barbarian hands! The avenger's prepared, proclaims his

Captaincy, though of green years: embraces a war

No boy–no other boy–could direct. Why cravenly reckon

The age of a god? These Caesars come to courage
young,

185 The surge of heavenly spirit outstrips mere calendars,

Takes mean delays ill. A mere babe

Was Hercules when he strangled those two serpents: even

In the cradle he proved worthy of Jove.

And you, Bacchus, still a youth, what age were *you* when
conquered

190 India bowed before your rod?

With the years–and luck–of your father, boy, you'll fight this

Campaign: with his years–and luck–you'll win.

Such a debut befits so great a name: today prince of

The youths, tomorrow of their seniors! Since

195 You have brothers, avenge these brothers' insults; since a

Father is yours, uphold a father's rights.

Your father, your country's father, has armed you for battle;

Your enemy has wrested *his* kingdom from

A reluctant sire. Your righteous javelins shall match his

200 Treacherous arrows. Justice and right shall march
 Before your banners. May these lost-cause Parthians likewise
 Lose every fight, may my prince bring the wealth of the
 East
 Back home! Mars and Caesar—one god, one god-to-be—endow
 him
 With your paternal powers as he sets forth!
 205 I prophesy victory for you, vow a song in your honour,
 Will extol you with loud praise:
 You'll stand and exhort your troops in words I have written –
 May my words, I pray, not fall short
 Of your valour! I'll speak of Parthian backs, of Roman
 courage,
 210 Of the shafts discharged by the foe
 As he retreats on horseback. If a Parthian flees to conquer
 What's left him for defeat? That's a bad
 Omen for warfare already. The day will come, most splendid
 Of beings, when you'll ride in gold behind
 215 Four snow-white steeds, preceded by captive chieftains, fetters
 About their necks to prevent the flight that brought
 Them safety before. Cheering youths will look on, and girls
 beside them,
 A day to make every heart run wild for joy;
 And when some girl inquires the names of the monarchs,
 220 Or the towns, rivers, hills portrayed
 On the floats, answer all her questions (and don't draw the
 line at
 Questions only): pretend
 You know even when you don't. *Here comes Euphrates*, tell her,
 With reed-fringed brow; those dark
 225 *Blue tresses belong to Tigris, I fancy; there go Armenians,*
That's Persia, and that, h'r'm, is some
Upland Achaemenid city. Both those men there are generals –

Give the names if you know them; if not, invent.

Banquets, too, give you an *entrée*, offer

230 More to the palate than wine:

There flushed Love has often clasped the horns of reclining

Bacchus in a seductive embrace,

And when wine has sodden Cupid's bibulous pinions

He's grounded, too sluggish for the sport he's begun.

235 Still, it takes *him* no time to shake out his damp plumage –

But if Love merely brushes the breast

You're wounded, it hurts. Wine rouses the heart, inclines to
passion:

Heavy drinking dilutes and banishes care

In a sea of laughter, gives the poor man self-confidence,

240 Smooths out wrinkles, puts paid

To pain and sorrow. Then our age's rarest endowment,

Simplicity, opens all hearts, as the god

Dissipates guile. Men's minds have often been enchanted

By girls at such times: ah, Venus in the wine

245 Is fire within fire! Night and drink can impair your eye for
beauty:

Don't trust the lamplight too much,

It's deceptive. When Paris examined those goddesses, when he
said, 'You

Beat them both, Venus,' he did it in broad

Daylight. But darkness hides faults, each blemish is forgiven:

250 Any woman you name will pass

As a beauty at night. Judge jewels or fine fabrics,

A face or a figure, *by day*.

How list every female resort with prospects for the hunter?

Sand-grains are fewer. Why tell of Baiae with

255 Its yacht-fringed beaches and hot sulphurous thermal

Baths? I met one tourist who came back

Home from there with a nasty hole in his heart, said the
waters

Weren't half as healthy as report made out.
Then there's Diana's woodland shrine, not far from the city,
260 With its murderous slave-priest –
Diana's a virgin, detests the shafts of Cupid: that's why
People who go in the woods
Always get hurt, always will.

So far my elegiacs
Have taught you which coverts to draw, where to
spread
265 Your erotic nets. What follows is more subtly artistic –
How to snare the girl of your choice.
All you gallants, mark and attend now; and you, the common
People, encourage my task with a thumbs-up!
The first thing to get in your head is that every single
270 Girl can be caught—and that you'll catch her if
You set your toils right. Birds will sooner fall dumb in
springtime,

Cicadas in summer, or a hunting-dog
Turn his back on a hare, than a lover's bland inducements
Can fail with a woman. Even one you suppose
275 Reluctant will want it. Like men, girls love stolen passion,
But are better at camouflaging their desires:
If masculine custom precluded courtship of women
You'd find each besotted girl
Taking the lead herself. A heifer amid lush pastures
280 Lows to the bull, a mare
Whinnies at stallions; but our male libido's milder,
Less rabid: man's sex has bounds
Imposed by convention. Incest is out. Think of wretched
Byblis –

Burned up by her brother, expiating her crime
 285 With a suicide's noose. Myrrha loved her father (but hardly
 As a daughter should), and now she's straitjacketed
 Behind tree-bark, oozing those fragrant tears we use for
 Perfume, named after her: myrrh.
 Once in the shady valleys of woodland Ida
 290 There roamed a milk-white bull,
 Pride of the herd, spotless save for one single
 Black mark between his horns:
 The heifers of Crete all yearned to sustain that burden
 On their backs; but Pasiphaë
 295 Proudly rejoiced in her role as bull's mistress, eyed his
 Cows with envious hate.
 What I say is well-known: not even Crete of the hundred
 Cities, for all her mendacious ways,
 Can deny it. With unpractised hands—they say—the lady
 300 Plucked leaves and lush grass
 For this bull, went off with the herds, unrestrained by concern
 for
 Her husband. A bull won out
 Over Minos himself. Why dress richly, Pasiphaë?
 Your lover's blind to your wealth.
 305 Why bother with mirrors when the company you're seeking
 Is upland cattle? Why keep fixing your hair,
 You silly girl? You're no heifer (on *that* you can trust your
 mirror) –
 But oh, how you wish you could sprout horns!
 If you love Minos, steer clear of *all* adulterers; if you
 310 Choose to cuckold your man, then at least
 Cuckold him with a man!
 See the queen desert her bower
 For woods and glens, like some god –

Frenzied maenad: ah, the times she eyed a cow in fury,
 Crying, 'What can my lord ever see
 In *that*? Just watch the silly creature frisking before him
 315 Down there at pasture—I suppose *she* thinks
 She's a raving beauty.' With that, she would have the
 wretched
 Cow dragged from the herd to be yoked to the plough
 Or poleaxed at the altar in a bogus sacrifice, just to
 320 Let her—a rare pleasure—get her hands
 On her rival's entrails. The times she slaughtered such heifers
 To appease the gods, and cried, as she held out
 Their guts, 'Go see how he likes you *notvl*' Now she craves to
 be Io,
 Now Europa: bovine, or bull-borne.
 325 Yet the herd-leader, taken in by a wooden cow, contrived to
 Fill her: their offspring betrayed
 Its paternity. Had Aerope restrained her love for Thyestes
 (And to forego even one man
 Is a serious matter), Phoebus would never have turned
 backwards
 330 In mid-flight, have driven his steeds
 And chariot Dawnwards. From Nisus his daughter stole that
 purple
 Lock—and now fights down
 The mad dogs that swarm from her groin. Agamemnon lived
 through battles
 On land, and great storms by sea,
 335 To become his wife's victim. Who's not wept for flame-racked
 Creüsa, for the children whose bloody death
 Stained Medea's hands? Amyntor's son Phoenix wept tears
 From sightless orbs; fright-maddened horses tore
 Hippolytus limb from limb. Ah Phineus, why blind your
 340 Innocent sons? On your own head the same

Horror will fall. Each one of these crimes was prompted

By woman's lust—lust that far

Outstrips ours in keenness and frenzy. Why doubt that you can
conquer

Any girl in sight? Few indeed

345 Will turn you down—and (willing or not) a male proposition

Is something they all enjoy. Draw a blank,

Rejection brings no danger. But why should you be rejected

When new thrills delight, when what's not ours

Has more allure than what is? The harvest's always richer

350 In another man's fields, the herd

Of our neighbour has fuller udders.

But first you must

get acquainted

With your quarry's maid—she can help

In the early stages. Make sure she enjoys the full confidence

Of her mistress: make sure you can trust

355 Her with your secret liaison. Corrupt her with promises,

Corrupt her with prayers. If

She's willing, you'll get what you want. She'll await the
propitious

Time (like a doctor) when her mistress is in

A receptive, seducible mood, when she's bursting out all over

360 With cheerfulness, like a wheat-crop in rich soil.

When hearts are rejoicing, and have no sorrow to constrict
them,

They're wide open, Venus can steal

In by persuasive guile. Grim Troy long faced her besiegers,

But a light-hearted change of mood

Fell for that troop-gravid horse.

Another time to try her

365 Is when she's been miffed by a rival. Make it your job

while To ensure she gets her revenge. Prime her maid to egg her on

Combing her hair each morning, put an oar in
To boost Ma'am's plain sailing, sigh to herself, and murmur:
370 'What a pity it is you can't just pay him out
With a tit-for-tat,' then talk about *you* in persuasive
Language, swear you're dying of mad
Passion. But lose no time, don't let the wind subside or
The sails drop slack. Fury, like brittle ice,
375 Melts with delay. You may ask, does it pay to seduce the
Maid herself? Such a gambit involves great risk.
Bed makes one girl jealous, takes the edge off another: will
she

Want you for her mistress—or for *her*?
It can go either way. Though the situation calls for
380 Bold risks, my advice is, *Don't*. I'm not the sort
To climb precipitous paths, sharp peaks. With me for leader
No young man will be caught. But if,
While she carries your letters back and forth, it's not just
Her zeal but her figure that tickles your fancy, then
make

385 Mistress first, maid second. Never *begin* your wooing
With the lady's companion. And here's one piece of
advice

(If you trust in my skill at all, if the greedy winds don't
Blow my words out to sea):
Lay off—or *make sure of her*. Once she's involved, and guilty,
390 There's no longer any fear
That she'll turn informer against you. What's the use of liming
A bird's wings if it escapes? A loose-netted boar
That breaks free is no good. Play your fish on the hook she's
taken,

Press home your assault, don't give up till victory's

won.*

397 But keep such relationships secret: with a secret informer
You'll always know every move your mistress makes.

It's wrong to suppose that only shipmen and toiling farmers

400 Must observe due season. Grain

Cannot always be trusted to the treacherous furrow, nor
curving

Hulls to the green deep; likewise

It's not always safe to pursue young girls: the occasion

Will often condition success. Thus, avoid

405 Her birthday; and April the First (the feast of Venus

In conjunction with Mars); and when

The Circus is decorated, not, as before, with gew-gaws

But with the wealth of kings: never make

Your attempt at such times—then storms are roughest, the
Pleiads

410 Sinking horizonwards, or the Kid washed down

Under the waves. Best to sit tight: those who venture

On the high seas now, limp home

With a dismembered vessel. Begin on a day of mourning:

The anniversary of Rome's bloody defeat

415 At the Allia—or perhaps on the Jewish sabbath: many

Shops will be shut then. Regard

Your mistress's birthday with superstitious horror,

Set a black mark against

Any day when you have to buy presents. Yet avoid it as you
may, she'll

420 Collect all the same. Every woman knows just how

To fleece her panting lover. When she's got a spending mood
on,

Some loose-garbed pedlar will come and spread out his
wares

With you sitting by. She'll ask you to look at the stuff, show

off your

Expert knowledge. Kisses will follow. Then

425 She'll insist that you buy it, swear it'll satisfy her

For years, say she needs it now, now's a good

Time to buy it. Tell her you haven't the cash in the house,
she'll

Ask for a note-of-hand—just to make

You sorry you learnt how to write. There's the birthday-cake
gambit,

430 A broad hint for presents: she's born χ times a year

As the occasion demands. Or she'll come up weeping, pretend
she's

Lost one of her ear-bobs. Such girls

Are always borrowing things that, once they've had loaned
them,

They never return. Your loss in this sort of case

435 Isn't even offset by gratitude. To list the tricks such gold-
digging

Tarts employ, I'd require ten mouths, ten tongues.

Let wax pave the way for you, spread out on smooth tablets,

Let wax go before as witness to your mind –

Bring her your flattering words, words that ape the lover:

440 And remember, whoever you are, to throw in some good
Entreaties. Entreaties are what made Achilles give back
Hector's

Body to Priam; even an angry god

Is moved by the voice of prayer. Make promises, what's the
harm in

Promising? Here's where anyone can play rich.

445 Hope, once entertained, is enduring: a deceptive

Goddess—but useful. Your gift

Once made, you can be abandoned, and with good reason:

She'll have fleeced you, past tense, at no

Loss to herself. But a present withheld breeds expectations:

450 That's how farmers, so often, are fooled by a barren field,
That's why the inveterate gambler doubles his losses

To stave off loss, why the dice-box beckons his hand
Back again and again. *This the task, this the labour*, to win her
Gift-free: she'll continue to give

455 Lest she lose what she's given already. A persuasive letter's
The thing to lead off with, explore her mind,
Reconnoitre the landscape. A message scratched on an apple
Betrayed Cydippe: she was snared by her own words.

My advice, then, young men of Rome, is to learn the noble

460 Advocate's arts—not only to let you defend
Some trembling client: a woman, no less than the populace,
Elite senator, or grave judge,
Will surrender to eloquence. Nevertheless, dissemble
Your powers, avoid long words,

465 Don't look too highbrow. Who but a mindless ninny
Declaims to his mistress? An over-lettered style
Repels girls as often as not. Use ordinary language,
Familiar yet coaxing words—as though
You were there, in her presence. If she refuses your letter,

470 Sends it back unread, persist:
Say you hope she'll read it later. Time breaks stubborn oxen
To the plough, time teaches a horse
To accept the bridle. An iron ring's worn by constant
Friction, the furrowed soil

475 Rubs away the curved ploughshare. What is softer than water,
What harder than stone? Yet the soft
Water-drip hollows hard rock. In time, with persistence,
You'll conquer Penelope. Troy fell late,

But fall it did. Suppose she reads your notes, but won't
answer?

480 Don't press her, just keep up

Your flattering *billets-doux*. The girl who reads letters

Will reply to them in the end: affairs like these

Go by degrees and stages. First you may get an angry

Note saying 'Don't pester me, please.'

485 She's really afraid you'll stop: what she wants (but says she
doesn't)

Is for you to go on. Press hard, you'll win through in the
end.

What else? If she's out, reclining in her litter,

Make your approach discreet,

And—just to fox the sharp ears of those around you –

490 Cleverly riddle each phrase

With ambiguous subtleties. If she's taking a leisurely

Stroll down the colonnade, then you stroll there too –

Vary your pace to hers, march ahead, drop behind her,

Dawdling and brisk by turns. Be bold,

495 Dodge in round the columns between you, brush your person

Lingeringly past hers. You must never fail

To attend the theatre when she does, gaze at her beauty –

From the shoulders up she's time

Most delectably spent, a feast for adoring glances,

500 For the eloquence of eyebrows, the speaking sign.

Applaud when some male dancer struts on as the heroine,

Cheer for each lover's role.

When she leaves, leave too—but sit there as long as she does:

Waste time at your mistress's whim.

505 Don't torture your hair, though, with curling-irons: don't
pumice

Your legs into smoothness. Leave *that*

To Mother Cybele's votaries, ululating in chorus

With their Phrygian modes. Real men

Shouldn't primp their good looks. When Theseus abducted
Ariadne

510 No pins held up *his* locks;
Hippolytus was no dandy, yet Phaedra loved him; Adonis,
That creature of woodland, allured
A goddess. Keep pleasantly clean, take exercise, work up an
outdoor

Tan; make quite sure that your toga fits
515 And doesn't show spots; don't lace your shoes too tightly
Or ignore any rusty buckles, or slop
Around in too large a fitting. Don't let some incompetent
barber

Ruin your looks: both hair and beard demand
Expert attention. Keep your nails pared, and dirt-free;
520 Don't let those long hairs sprout
In your nostrils, make sure your breath is never offensive,
Avoid the rank male stench
That wrinkles noses. Beyond this is for wanton women –
Or any half-man who wants to attract men.

525 Lo! Bacchus calls to his poet: Bacchus too helps lovers,
Fosters that flame with which he burns himself –
As Ariadne discovered, ranging the unfamiliar
Sea-strand of Naxos, crazed
Out of her mind, fresh-roused from sleep, in an ungirt
530 Robe, blonde hair streaming loose, barefoot,
Calling 'Ah cruel Theseus!' to the deaf waves, tears coursing
Down her innocent-tender cheeks.

She wept, she besought, yet contrived to remain appealing
Despite all: not even those tears
535 Could imperil such beauty. Hands beating her soft bosom,
'He's gone,' she cried, 'he's betrayed me: what, ah what
Will become of me now?' Then, presto, the whole shore

echoed

With frenzied drumming, the clash
Of cymbals. She broke off, speechless, fainted

540 In terror, the blood fled

From her pale inert limbs, as wild-tressed Bacchanals, wanton
Satyrs, the god's forerunners, appeared,
With drunken old Silenus, scarce fit to ride his swaybacked
Ass, hands clutching its mane

545 As he chased the Maenads—the Maenads would flee and rally –
A dizzy rider, whipping his steed ahead

Till he pitched off the long-eared ass on his head, and the
satyrs

All shouted: 'Up with you, Dad!

Come on up there!' And then came the god, his chariot grape-
clustered,

550 Paired tigers padding on as he shook

The golden reins. Poor girl: lost voice, lost colour—lost
Theseus.

Thrice she tried to run, thrice stood frozen with fear,
Shivering, like the thin breeze-rustled cornstalk,
Or osiers in a marsh. 'I am here

555 For you,' the god told her. 'My love will prove more faithful.
No need for fear. You shall be

Wife to Bacchus, take the sky as your dowry, be seen there
As a star, the Cretan Crown, a familiar guide

To wandering vessels.' Down he sprang from his chariot, lest
the

560 Girl take fright at the tigers; set his foot

On the shore, then gathered her up in his arms—no resistance –
And bore her away. No trouble for gods to do

Whatever they please. Loud cheers, a riotous wedding:
Bacchus

And his bride were soon bedded down.

565 So when the blessings of Bacchus are set out before you

At dinner, with a lady to share your couch,

Then pray the Lord of Darkness and Nocturnal Orgies

To stop the wine going to your head!

Here double-talk is the vogue: lace your conversation

570 With ambiguous phrases designed to make the girl

Feel they're specially meant for her. Write flatteries on the
table

In wine, let her read herself your heart's

Mistress: gaze deep in her eyes with open passion –

One silent glance can speak

575 Whole volumes. Make sure you're the first to snatch the cup
that

Her lips have touched: drink from where she has drunk;

And if there's some piece of food she's fingered, take it,

Brushing her hand as you reach out.

Let it be your concern, too, to please your lady's escort –

580 He'll be more use to you as a friend.

When you're dicing to settle the drinking-order, let him take
your

Place, give him the garland off your head,

Never mind if he's placed below you or with you, still let him

Be served first every time, defer to his words.*

I'll give you specific advice, now, on just what limits

590 You should set to your drinking. Keep mind and feet

Steady. Above all, avoid drunken quarrels, don't get

Into a fight too fast.

His stupid swilling killed off Eurytion the Centaur;

Wine over dinner was rather meant to promote

595 Fun and games. So if you've a voice, then sing; or if your
movements

Are graceful, dance. Please with whatever gifts

You possess to give pleasure. And though real drunkenness

can harm you,

To feign it may prove useful. Let your devious tongue

Stutter and slur: then, however licentious your words or

600 Actions, they'll be blamed on the wine. 'A health

To the lady,' you'll cry, 'a health to the man she sleeps with!'

– While silently wishing her present partner in hell.

But when the tables are cleared, and the guests departing,

And in the confusion you perceive your chance

605 To make contact, then join the crowd, discreetly approach her

On the way out, let your fingers brush against

Her side, touch her foot with yours. Now's the time for
chatting

Her up, no clodhopping bashfulness—the bold

Are favoured by Chance and Venus. Don't think that your
eloquence

610 Must conform to poetic canons. Just pitch in

And you'll find yourself fluent enough. You must play
the lover,

Ape heartache with words, use every subtle device

To compel her belief. It's not hard—what woman doesn't
believe she's

A natural object for love, or, however plain,

615 Isn't thrilled by her own appearance? Besides, very often

That passion a gallant feigns in his opening round

Will become the real thing. (So, girls, show more kindness to
pretenders:

True love may spring tomorrow from today's

False declaration.) Press on, undermine them with devious

620 Flatteries: so a stream will eat away

Its overhanging bank. Never weary of praising

Her face, her hair, her slim fingers, her tiny feet.

Even the chaste like having their good looks published,

Even virgins are taken up with their own

625 Cute figures. Why does it still bother Juno and Pallas

That they didn't win first prize in the Phrygian woods?

When it's praised, then Juno's peacock displays its plumage;

If you stare without comment—no show.

Even racehorses, back in the paddock, respond with pleasure

630 To a combed mane, a pat on the neck.

Don't be shy about promising: it's promises girls are undone
by;

Invoke any gods you please

To endorse your performance. Jupiter smiles from heaven

On foresworn lovers, lets all their perjuries blow

635 Away unrequited. (*He* used to swear falsely, by Styx, to Juno –

So looks now with favour on others who do the same.)

The existence of gods is expedient: let us therefore assume it,

With gifts of incense and wine on their antique hearths

—
No carefree repose, like a drowsy siesta, keeps them

640 Remote after all. So, lead an innocent life:

Divinity's nigh. Honour bonds, don't embezzle deposits,

Avoid murder and fraud. If you're wise

Gull only girls, they're no danger. In this one deception

It's good faith that ought to make you blush.

645 They're cheats, so cheat *them*: most are dumb and
unscrupulous: let them

Fall into the traps they've set themselves.

Egypt had drought for nine years once, no rain to quicken

Her harvest-fields. Then Thrasius the sage

Told King Busiris the gods could be propitiated

650 With a stranger's spilt blood.

Busiris replied: 'You shall be the gods' first victim, you the

Stranger who brings water to Egypt's soil.'

So Perillus, the inventor of Phalaris' brazen bull, was

The first, unlucky man, to roast in his own
 665 Cruel contrivance. Both kings did right. No fairer statute
 Than that which condemns the artificer of death
 To perish by his art. So let perjuries gull the perjured,
 Let Woman smart from the wounds she first dealt out!
 Tears, too, will help: with tears you'll shift adamant. Flaunt
 wet
 660 Cheeks—if you can—for *her* to see:
 But if tears won't come (and they sometimes fail in a crisis)
 Just wipe a moist hand across your eyes!
 What sensible man will not intersperse his coaxing
 With kisses? Even if she doesn't kiss back,
 665 Still force on regardless! She may struggle, cry 'Naughty!',
 Yet she wants to be overcome. Just take care
 Not to bruise her tender lips with such hard-snatched kisses,
 Don't give her a chance to protest
 You're too rough. Those who grab their kisses, but not what
 follows,
 670 Deserve to lose all they've gained. How short were you
 Of the ultimate goal after all your kissing? That was
 Gaucheness, not modesty, I'm afraid...
 It's all right to use force—force of *that* sort goes down well with
 The girls: what in fact they love to yield
 675 They'd often rather have stolen. Rough seduction
 Delights them, the audacity of near-rape
 Is a compliment—so the girl who *could* have been forced, yet
 somehow
 Got away unscathed, may feign delight, but in fact
 Feels sadly let down. Hilaira and Phoebe, both ravished,
 680 Both fell for their ravishers. Then there's another tale,
 Well-known, but well worth retelling, which recounts how
 Achilles

Made a girl on Scyros his:

It was after the goddess had won that beauty-competition

Against her peers on Ida, and had given her own

685 Reward to Paris; after Priam had welcomed his foreign

Daughter-in-law, and a Greek wife came to dwell

Within Troy's walls. All swore allegiance to the injured

Husband. So one man's hurt became

A national cause. But Achilles—to his shame, were the act not
prompted

690 By a mother's prayers—concealed his manhood beneath

A girl's long robe. What's this? Wool-spinning's not your
business,

Achilles: it's quite another of Pallas' arts

Through which you'll find fame. What have you to do with
baskets?

Your arm should support a shield. Why does the hand

695 That will one day slay Hector carry a skein? Cast aside your
spindle

With its laborious threading: the Pelian spear

Is *what you* should wield.

The king's daughter, Deidamia,

Who shared his room soon proved

That manhood through rape. Her seduction must have been
forceful,

700 But to *be* forced was what she desired.

'Don't go,' she cried, when Achilles was hastening from her,

Distaff forgotten, a warrior under arms.

Where's that violence now? Why coax the perpetrator

Of your rape to remain, Deidamia? If you take

705 The initiative, it's true, you may feel some embarrassment:
better.

To let *him*—and more fun when you submit.

Any lover who waits for his girl to make the running

Has too much faith in his own
 Irresistible charms. The first approaches, the pleading,
 710 Are the man's concern: *her* place
 Is to hear his smooth line with kindness. To win her, ask her:
 She's dying to be asked. Just provide a good excuse
 For her to fulfil your wishes. Jupiter wooed those antique
 Heroines as a suppliant. No girl seduced
 715 The Almighty. But if you find that your pleading induces
 Puffed-up disdain, then ease off,
 Take a step back. Many women adore the elusive,
 Hate over-eagerness. So, play hard to get,
 Stop boredom developing. And don't let your entreaties
 720 Sound too confident of possession. Insinuate sex
 Camouflaged as friendship. I've seen ultra-stubborn creatures
 Fooled by this gambit, the switch from companion to
 stud.
 For sailors a pale complexion is inappropriate,
 They should be tanned and dark,
 725 Fetchingly weatherbeaten; so should husbandmen
 Who spend their time out of doors
 With plough and harrow; so should the champion athlete –
 If *they're* white, it looks all wrong.
 But let every lover be pale: here's the proper complexion
 730 For lovers; this gambit, please note,
 Has worked on every occasion. Pale was Orion, roaming
 The woodlands, pining for Side; pale
 Daphnis (ah, unkind Naiad!). Look lean and haggard
 As proof of your passion, don't baulk
 735 At hooding your lustrous curls. Sleepless nights, the pangs and
 worry
 Of consuming love–these will reduce young men
 To a thin nothing. If you mean to achieve your purpose

Be an object of pity, so that the passers-by
Will say at once, 'He's in love'.

Now should I complain, or warn you,
740 That no one now distinguishes right from wrong?
Friendship and honour are empty words, it's not safe to praise
your

Girl to a friend—if he believes what you say
He'll be in there himself. You may ask, 'Did Patroclus cuckold
Achilles? Wasn't Phaedra perfectly chaste
745 With Pirithoüs? Didn't Pylades love Hermione as Apollo
Loved Pallas, or Castor his twin?'
If anyone nurses *that* hope, he'll believe that apples grow on
Tamarisks, that honey's to be found in midstream.
The base alone gives pleasure; men seek only their own
enjoyment,

750 And find that sweet when it springs from another's pain.
How outrageous, when it's not their enemies that lovers
Most need to fear! Nowadays you'll be safe enough
If you shun those you trust. Cousins, brothers, loyal comrades

—

Here's where your real trouble lies.
755 One word more before I stop. The characters of women
All differ. To capture a thousand hearts demands
A thousand devices. Some soils are better for olives,
Some for vines, or for wheat: you can't
Raise them all in one field. Hearts have as many changing
760 Moods as the face has expressions. A wise man
Will adapt to countless fashions, will resolve himself, like
Proteus,

Into water, now lion, now tree,
Now bristling boar. Some fish are trawled, some netted,
Some caught with line and hook:

765 And don't try the same technique on every age-group,
An old doe will spot the trap
From much further off. If a simpleton finds you too highbrow
Or a prude over-coarse, they'll feel
Self-distrust and dismay. That's how the girl who shies off
decent

770 Lovers will cheapen herself by giving in
To some low cad.

This concludes the first part of my venture –
Now throw out the anchor, let my craft ride secure!

BOOK 2

Cry hurrah, and hurrah again, for a splendid triumph –
The quarry I sought has fallen into my toils.

Each happy lover now rates my verses higher

Than Homer's or Hesiod's, awards them the palm

5 Of victory. He's as cheerful as Paris was, sailing away from

Warlike Sparta, the guest who stole a bride,

Or Pelops, the stranger, the winner of Hippodameia

After that chariot-race.

Why hurry, young man? Your ship's still in mid-passage,

10 And the harbour I seek is far away.

Through my verses, it's true, you may have *acquired* a
mistress,

But that's not enough. If my art

Caught her, my art must keep her. To guard a conquest's

As tricky as making it. There was luck in the chase,

15 But *this* task will call for skill. If ever I needed support from

Venus and Son, and Erato—the Muse

Erotic by name—it's now, for my too-ambitious project

To relate some techniques that might restrain

That fickle young globetrotter, Love. He's winged and flighty,

20 Hard to pin down. Just so

Minos might block every line of escape, yet his guest still
found a

Daring way out—by air.

When Daedalus had built his labyrinth to imprison

The bull-man, man-bull, conceived through a queen's
guilt,

25 He said: 'Most just Minos, put a term, now, to my exile,

Let my native soil receive

My ashes. Since unkind fate would not let me live there,

Grant me at least to die

In my own country. Release / the boy, if you hold his father's

30 Services cheap; spare me if you will not spare

My son.' So much he said—but might have gone on pleading

For ever in vain: the king

Would not grant his request. When Daedalus perceived this,

Now, now is the time, he told himself, *to deploy*

35 *All your skill and craft. Minos rules earth, rides ocean:*

No escape by sea or land. All that remains

Is the sky. So, through the sky we'll seek our passage –

God in high heaven, forgive

Such a project! I do not aspire to touch your starry dwellings:

40 *This is the only way I have to escape*

My master. Were there a way by Styx, through Stygian waters

We'd swim to freedom. I must devise new laws

For human nature. Necessity often mothers invention.

Who would have believed man could ever fly?

45 But Daedalus fashioned birds' oarage, trimmed it with feathers

Bonded the flimsy fabric with linen thread,

Melted wax to glue wings in place. Very soon his novel

Craftsman's task was achieved:

50 Excitedly the boy studied wings and wax, not guessing

The gear had been made for his own

Shoulders and arms, till his father said: "These are the craft
which

Must bear us home, with their aid

We must escape from Minos. Though he's blocked all other

55 Routes to us, he cannot master the air—as you

Can do, through my device. But take care, don't go stargazing

At belted Orion or the Bear:

Take these pinions, fly behind me: I'll go ahead, you

Follow my lead. That way

60 You'll be safe. If we fly too close to the sun, through the upper
 Air, then the wax will be softened by the heat;
 If we stoop too low seaward, then our thrashing pinions
 Will grow waterlogged from the spray.
 So, my son, set a middle course—and watch out for turbulent
 Air-currents: spread your wings
 65 To the steady breeze, go with it.' While he talked, he was
 fitting
 The boy's gear, showing him how to move
 Like a mother bird with her fledglings. Then he fixed his own
 harness
 To his shoulders, nervously poised himself for this
 strange
 New journey; paused on the brink of take-off, embraced his
 70 Son, couldn't fight back his tears.
 They'd found a hilltop—above the plain, but no mountain –
 And from this they took off
 On their hapless flight. Daedalus flexed his wings, glanced
 back at
 His son's, held a steady course. The new
 75 Element bred delight. Fear forgotten, Icarus flew more
 Boldly, with daring skill. The pair
 Were glimpsed by an angler, line bobbing, who at the sight of
 them
 Dropped his rod in surprise. They left
 Naxos and Paros behind them, skirted Delos, beloved of
 80 Apollo, flew on east: to the north go
 Lay Samos, southward Lebynthos, Calýmne with its shady
 Forests, and Astypálaea, set amid fish-rich shoals.
 Then the boy, made over-reckless by youthful daring,
 abandoned
 His father, soared aloft
 85 Too close to the sun: the wax melted, the ligatures

Flew apart, his flailing arms had no hold
 On the thin air. From dizzy heaven he gazed down seaward
 In terror. Fright made the scene go black
 Before his eyes. No wax, wings gone, a thrash of naked
 90 Arms, a shuddering plunge
 Down through the void, a scream—'Father, father, I'm falling —'
 Cut off as he hit the waves.
 His unhappy father, a father no longer, cried: 'Icarus!
 Icarus, where are you? In what part of the sky
 95 Do you fly now?'—then saw wings littering the water.
 Earth holds his bones; the Icarian Sea, his name.
 So Minos failed to clip the wings of a mortal—yet here am
 I now, planning to pin down the winged god.
 Delusions abound. Don't mess with Thessalian witchcraft —
 100 That love-charm torn from the brow
 Of a foal is no good. Not all Medea's herbs, not every
 Spell and magical cantrip will suffice
 To keep love alive—else Circe had held Ulysses,
 And Medea her Jason, by their arts alone.
 105 Giving girls aphrodisiac drugs, too, is useless—and dangerous:
 Drugs can affect the brain, induce madness. Avoid
 All such nasty tricks. To be loved you must show yourself
 lovable —
 Something good looks alone
 Can never achieve. You may/be handsome as Homer's Nireus,
 110 Or young Hylas, snatched by those bad
 Naiads; but all the same, to avoid a surprise desertion
 And keep your girl, it's best you have gifts of mind
 In addition to physical charms. Beauty's fragile, the passing
 Years diminish its substance, eat it away.
 115 Violets and bell-mouthed lilies do not bloom for ever,
 Hard thorns are all that's left of the blown rose.

So with you, my handsome youth: soon wrinkles will furrow

Your body; soon, too soon, your hair turn grey.

Then build an enduring mind, add that to your beauty:

120 It alone will last till the flames

Consume you. Keep your wits sharp, explore the liberal

Arts, win a mastery over Greek

As well as Latin. Ulysses was eloquent, not handsome –

Yet he filled sea-goddesses' hearts

125 With aching passion. How often Calypso lamented

His haste to be off, swore the sea

Was too rough for rowing! Again and again she'd beg him

To recount Troy's fate, made him find fresh words

For the same old tale. They'd pace the shore; pretty Calypso

130 Would say: 'Now tell me how King Rhesus met

His bloody end.' Then Ulysses would take the stick he was
holding

And sketch in the wet sand whatever scene

She'd demanded. 'Here's Troy,' he'd say, making walls of
shingle,

'And here's the river. Let's call this bit my camp.

135 This was the plain –' he levelled it – 'where we butchered
Dolon,

The spy-by-night, as he dreamed

Of Achilles' horses. There stood the tents of Rhesus;

I rode back home that night

On the King's captured steeds –' As he spoke, a sudden breaker

140 Washed away Rhesus, his camp, and Troy itself.

Then the goddess exclaimed: 'You'd trust *these* waves for your
voyage?

Look at the great names they've destroyed!'

So don't rely too much on looks, they can prove deceptive

Whoever you are: have something more than physique!

145 Nothing works on a mood like tactful tolerance: harshness
 Provokes hatred, makes nasty rows.
 We detest the hawk and the wolf, those natural hunters,
 Always preying on timid flocks;
 But the gentle swallow goes safe from man's snares, we
 fashion

150 Little turreted houses for doves.
 Keep clear of all quarrels, sharp-tongued recriminations –
 Love's sensitive, needs to be fed
 With gentle words. Leave nagging to wives and husbands,
 Let *them*, if they want, think it a natural law,

155 A permanent state of feud. Wives thrive on wrangling,
 That's their dowry. A mistress should always hear
 What she wants to be told. You don't share one bed by legal
 Fiat, with you love substitutes for law.
 Use tender blandishments, language that caresses

160 The ear, make her glad you came.
 I'm not here as preceptor of loving to the wealthy; a suitor
 With gifts doesn't need my skills –
 Anyone attractive who says 'Here's something for you,'
 Has genius of his own. To such a one

165 I give place: he's got my tricks beat. I'm the poor man's poet,
 Was poor myself as a lover, couldn't afford
 Gifts, so spun words. Poor suitors must Woo with caution,
 Watch their tongues, bear much that the rich
 Would never put up with. I recall how once in anger

170 I pulled my girl's hair. The days I lost through that
 Little outburst! I don't think I tore her dress, I wasn't
 conscious
 Of doing so—but *she* said I did, and the bill
 Was paid for at my expense. Avoid (if you're wise) your
 teacher's

Errors, shun what may cost you dear.

175 Fight Parthians, but keep peace with a civilized mistress,
Have fun together, do all that induces love.

If the girl's curt and unreceptive to your wooing,

Persist, be obdurate: the time will come

When she's more welcoming. Go with the bough, you'll bend
it;

180 Use brute force, it'll snap.

Go with the current: that's how to swim across rivers –

Fighting upstream's no good.

Go easy with lions or tigers if you aim to tame them;

The bull gets inured to the plough by slow degrees.

185 Was there ever a girl more prickly than Atalanta?

Yet tough as she was, she went down

Before a man's prowess. Milanion, roaming the forest,

Kept bewailing his lot, and the girl's

Unkindness. She made him hump hunting-nets on his back, he

190 Was for ever spearing wild boars;

His wounded flesh learnt the strength of Hylaeus the Centaur's

Taut bow–yet his keener pangs

Came from another bow, Cupid's. I'm not suggesting

You have to go lugging nets up mountain glens

195 Or play the hunter, or bare your breast to flying arrows –

A cautious lover will find the rules of my art

Undemanding enough. So, yield if she shows resistance:

That way you'll win in the end. Just be sure to play

The part she allots you. Censure the things she censures,

200 Endorse her endorsements, echo her every word,

Pro or con, and laugh whenever she laughs; remember,

If she weeps, to weep too: take your cue

From her every expression. Suppose she's playing a board-
game,

Then throw the dice carelessly, move
 205 Your pieces all wrong. At knucklebones, when you beat her,
 Exact no forfeit, roll low throws yourself
 As often as you can manage. If you're playing halma, permit
 her
 Glass piece to take yours. Open up
 Her parasol, hold it over her when she's out walking,
 210 Clear her a path through the crowd.
 When she's on her chaise-longue, make haste to find a
 footstool
 For those dainty feet of hers, help her on and off
 With her slippers. At times she'll feel cold: then (though you're
 shivering
 Yourself) warm her tiny hand
 215 In your bosom. Don't jib at a slavish task like holding
 Her mirror: slavish or not, such attentions please.
 When his stepmother Hera tired of sending him monsters
 To vanquish, then the hero who won a place
 In the sky he'd formerly shouldered took to the distaff
 220 And basket, spun wool among Ionian girls.
 If Hercules, then, obeyed *his* mistress's orders, will you
 Flinch from enduring what he endured?
 She says you've a date in town? Be sure you always get there
 Ahead of time; don't give her up
 225 Till it's *really* late. If she asks you to meet her somewhere,
 Put everything off, elbow your way through the crowd
 At the double. When she comes home, late at night, from a
 party,
 You still must attend, like her slave,
 If she summons you. It's the same when she's in the country:
 230 Love detests laggards. You've no transport? Walk.
 Don't be put off by bad weather, or a heatwave,
 Or snowdrifts blocking your road.

Love is a species of warfare. Slack troopers, go elsewhere!

It takes more than cowards to guard

235 These standards. Night-duty in winter, long route-marches,
every

Hardship, all forms of suffering: these await

The recruit who expects a soft option. You'll often be out in

Cloudbursts, and bivouack on the bare

Ground. We know how Apollo pastured Admetus' cattle,

240 Dossed down in a herdsman's hut. What mere

Mortal's too good for conditions a god accepted? Is lasting

Love your ambition? Then put away all pride.

The simple, straightforward way in may be denied you,

Doors bolted, shut in your face –

245 So be ready to slip down from the roof through a lightwell,

Or sneak in by an upper-floor window. She'll be glad

To know you're risking your neck, and for her sake: that will
offer

Any mistress sure proof of your love.

Leander might, often enough, have endured Hero's absence –

250 But swam over to show her how he felt.

Don't think it beneath you to cultivate madam's houseboys

And her more important maids:

Greet each one by name (the gesture costs you nothing),

Clasp their coarse hands in yours—all part of the game.

255 On Good Luck Day, if you're asked for a present, even

By a slave, then give: the expense

Will be minimal. See that the maids, too, get a handout

On *their* day (the day those Gauls

Were figged by some dressed-up slaveys). It pays, believe me,

260 To keep in with the servants—especially those who watch
Her front-door or bedroom entrance.

Don't give your mistress costly

Presents: let them be small, but chosen with skill

And discretion. At harvest-time, when fields are full, boughs
heavy,

Send round a basket of fruit –

265 Say it came from your country estate (though you really
bought it

At some smart city shop). Give her grapes,

Or the chestnuts to which Amaryllis was so devoted –

No, not chestnuts, she's off them these days:

Much too cheap. Why not try a poulterer's hoop of thrushes

270 By way of remembrance? (It's shameful to use such gifts

In the hope of a death, to bribe the elderly or barren:

I've no time for those who give presents a bad name.)

Would you be well advised to send her love-poems?

Poetry, I fear, is held in small esteem.

275 Girls praise a poem, but go for expensive presents:

Any illiterate oaf can catch their eye

Provided he's rich. Today is truly the Golden

Age: gold buys honours, gold

Procures love. If Homer dropped by—with all the Muses,

280 But empty-handed—he'd be shown the door.

There *are* a few cultured girls (not many, it's true), and others

Who'd like to be cultured, but aren't;

Flatter any of these with poems: a bravura declamation

Even of trash—this will suffice to win

285 Their approval. Clever or stupid, they'll take a poem fashioned

In the small hours, for *them*, as a cute little gift.

Make your mistress ask as a favour for what you intended,

All along, to do yourself

In the way of self-interest. You've promised manumission

290 To one slave? See that he begs it, first, from her.

You plan to spare another his flogging, or the chain-gang?

Then put her in your debt for a 'change of heart'

That never existed. The benefit's yours, give her the credit,

Waste not want not, while she

295 Plays the Lady Bountiful. You're anxious to keep your
mistress?

Convince her she's knocked you all of a heap

With her stunning looks. If it's purple she's wearing, praise
purple;

When she's in a silk dress, say silk

Suits her best of all; if her mantle's gold-embroidered

300 Say she's dearer than gold to you; if tweeds
Take her fancy, back tweeds. She's in her slip? She inflames
you

(Tell her) with passion—but ask, at the same time,

Very shyly, 'Aren't you cold?' Compliment the way she's
parted

Or curled her hair. Admire

305 Her singing voice, her gestures as she dances,

Cry 'Encore!' when she stops. You can even praise

Her performance in bed, her talent for love-making –

Spell out what turned you on.

Though she may show fiercer in action than any Medusa,

310 Her lover will always describe her as kind

And gentle. But take care not to give yourself away while

Making such tongue-in-cheek compliments, don't allow

Your expression to ruin the message. Art's most effective

When concealed. Detection discredits you for good.

315 Often in early autumn, when the year's at its sweetest,

When grapes glow purple and full,

One day we'll be chilled to the bone, the next get heat-
exhaustion,

Our bodies made listless by the changing air.

Let's hope your girl keeps well—but if this unhealthy
 320 Season turns her sickly, sends her to bed,
 Then let her see, beyond doubt, how she's loved and
 cherished,
 Then sow your seed: you'll reap a bumper crop
 When the time is ripe. Bear with her fretful sickness,
 Attend in person to all she'll let you do;
 325 Let her see you weeping, comfort her with kisses
 Day in, day out; let her parched
 Lips drink your tears. Invent cheerful dreams to tell her,
 Make vows galore—and all of them aloud.
 Bring round some old crone to purify bed and bedroom,
 330 Eggs and sulphur clutched in her tremulous hands.
 All this will be proof of your willing care: such tactics
 Have often led to a legacy. But don't
 Let your services risk incurring the invalid's displeasure –
 Sedulous zeal should know its proper bounds.
 335 Never restrict her diet, never make her drink unpleasant
 Medicines: leave your rival to deal with such things.
 Remember, the wind you spread your sails to when leaving
 Harbour should not be used out on the high
 Seas: let your young love, fancy free, gather strength through
 340 Experience. Nourish it well, in time
 It will grow steadfast. The bull you now fear began as
 The calf you stroked; the tree
 Beneath which you recline was once a sapling. A river's
 Small beginnings swell with progression, embrace
 345 Many confluent waters. Get her accustomed to you:
 Habit's the key, spare no pains till that's achieved.
 Let her always see you around, always hear you talking,
 Show her your face night and day.

When you're confident you'll be missed, when your absence
350 Seems sure to cause her regret,
 Then give her some respite: a field improves when fallow,
 Parched soil soaks up the rain.
Demophoön's presence gave Phyllis no more than mild
excitement;

 It was his sailing caused arson in her heart.
355 Penelope was racked by crafty Ulysses' absence,
 Protesilaus, abroad, made Laodameia burn.
Short partings do best, though: time wears out affections,
 The absent love fades, a new one takes its place.
With Menelaus away, Helen's disinclination for sleeping
360 Alone led her into her guest's
 Warm bed at night. Were you crazy, Menelaus?
 Why go off leaving your wife
 With a stranger in the house? Do you trust doves to falcons,
 Full sheepfolds to mountain wolves?
365 Here Helen's not at fault, the adulterer's blameless –
 He did no more than you, or any man else,
 Would do yourself. By providing place and occasion
 You precipitated the act. What else did she do
 But act on your clear advice? Husband gone; this stylish
stranger

370 Here on the spot; too scared to sleep alone –
 Oh, Helen wins my acquittal, the blame's her husband's:
 All *she* did was take advantage of a man's
 Human complaisance. And yet, more savage than the tawny
 Boar in his rage, as he tosses the maddened dogs
375 On lightning tusks, or a lioness suckling her unweaned
 Cubs, or the tiny adder crushed
 By some careless foot, is a woman's wrath, when some rival
 Is caught in the bed *she* shares. Her feelings show

On her face. Decorum's flung to the wind, a maenadic
 380 Frenzy grips her, she rushes headlong off
 After fire and steel. Deserted, barbarian Medea
 Avenged her marital wrongs
 On Jason by killing their children—like Procne the swallow,
 Another ruthless mother, breast stained red
 385 With blood. Such acts destroy the most strongly bonded
 Passions: all prudent men should avoid
 Set-tos of this sort. Such a ruling, though, won't condemn you
 (God forbid!) to one girl alone. No bride can expect
That degree of devotion. Have fun, but play it discreetly –
 390 Don't broadcast your intrigues
 As a boost for your ego. Don't make regular assignations,
 Don't give X presents that Y might recognize.
 Don't always meet in the same place: the lady may catch you
 If you haunt the milieux that she knows –
 395 And whenever you write, make sure all previous letters
 Have been erased from your tablets: many girls read
 More than was ever sent them. Venus, when affronted,
 Hits back, inflicts on you
 All that she suffered. So long as Agamemnon was faithful,
 400 Clytemnestra stayed chaste. It was her husband's crimes
 Turned her to the bad. She'd heard how Chryses, sacerdotal
 Fillet on head and laurel in hand, had failed
 To win back his daughter. She'd heard the sad tale of
 abducted
 Briseis, knew how shameful delay
 Had prolonged the war. Yet all this was mere hearsay: Priam's
 daughter
 405 Cassandra she'd *seen*, the conqueror shamefully caught
 By his own captive. It was then she welcomed Thyestes' son to
 Her heart and bed, avenged her husband's ill deed.

Should your carefully camouflaged actions be brought not
notwithstanding

410 To light, then deny them still, through thick and thin;
Don't be over-subservient, don't flatter her more than usual –
Such traits are clear proof of guilt.

Go to it in bed: that's the one way you'll get round her,
With cocksmanship so fine it *has* to disprove

415 Any earlier peccadillo. Some advise taking aphrodisiac
Herbal concoctions—they're poison, believe you me.
Some crush up pepper with nettleseed, an urticant mixture,
Or blend yellow camomile in vintage wine;

But the goddess worshipped high on Eryx's leafy mountain

420 Won't let her joys be forced this way –
Try white Megarian onions, and salacious colewort
Picked from your kitchen-garden; eat eggs;
Enrich your diet with Hymettus honey, with the needled
Pine-tree's delectable nuts.

Why digress on such hocus-pocus, Muse? I must guide my
425 chariot

Straight down the innermost lane,
Grazing the rail. Just now, at my urging, you were ready
To keep your affairs a secret. Now change tack
– At my urging—and publish them. Don't chide me for fickle

430 Impulses: no ship is always blown
By the same prevailing wind. We veer to every quarter
As the breeze fills our sails. Watch how
A charioteer will handle his horses, first letting them gallop,
Then skilfully reining them in.

435 Some women just don't react well to timid complaisance:
If there's no competition in sight
Their love wanes. Success will often breed presumption,
It's hard to keep your head

Through a run of good luck. You've seen the fire that
smoulders

440 Down to nothing, grows a crown of pale ash
Over its hidden embers (yet a sprinkling of sulphur
Will suffice to rekindle the flame)?
So with the heart. It grows torpid from lack of worry,
Needs a sharp stimulus to elicit love.

445 Get her anxious about you, reheat her tepid passions,
Tell her your guilty secrets, watch her blanch.
Thrice fortunate that man, lucky past calculation,
Who can make some poor injured girl

Torture herself over him, lose voice, go pale, pass out when
450 The unwelcome news reaches her. Ah, may I
Be the one whose hair she tears out in her fury, the one whose
Soft cheeks she rips with her nails,
Whom she sees, eyes glaring, through a rain of tears; without
whom,

Try as she will, she cannot live!

455 How long (you may ask) should you leave her lamenting her
wrong? A little

While only, lest rage gather strength
Through procrastination. By then you should have her sobbing
All over your chest, your arms tight round her neck.

You want peace? Give her kisses, make love to the girl while
she's crying –

460 That's the only way to melt her angry mood.

When she's been raging at you, when she seems utterly
hostile,

Then is the time to try

An alliance in bed. She'll come through. Bed's where harmony
dwells when

The fighting's done: that's the place

465 Where loving-kindness was born. The doves that lately fought

now

Call softly, bill and coo.

The world at first was mere mass, confused and patternless,
one great

Mingled vista: stars, earth, sea. But soon

Heaven was set above earth, land ringed with water,

470 And the void withdrew to its own place.

Birds made their home in the air, beasts in the forest:

Deep underwater, fish lurked.

Mankind was nomadic then, went wandering through an
empty

Landscape, mere muscular brutes

475 Whose home was the woodland, who ate / grass, used leaves
for bedding,

Went solitary, long avoided their own kind.

What softened those fierce hearts? Voluptuous pleasure

When a man and a woman stopped

In the same place. They found what to do by themselves. No
teacher

480 Was needed. Venus saw the sweet game through

Without subtle trimmings. The bird has his mate, the fish will

Find a partner out in the deep,

Hind follows stag, serpent tangles with serpent,

Dog mounts random dog, the ewe

485 Thrills to be covered, bulls rouse their heifers, the snub-nosed

She-goat's back sustains

Her rank male partner. Mares are driven to frenzy,

Cross rivers in hot pursuit

Of their stallions. So get moving with this potent medicine

490 When your lady's angry: nothing else will relieve

Her fierce distress, this dose surpasses even Machaon's

Drugs: if you've been unfaithful, this will make your
peace.

As I was reciting these lines, Apollo abruptly
 Materialized beside me, thrumming a chord
 495 On his gilded lyre, bay in hand, bay wreathed about his sacred
 Hair (to poets he will sometimes appear
 In visible form). 'Preceptor,' he told me, 'of wanton
 Love, come, lead your disciples to my shrine,
 Show them the world-famous sign, that brief commandment:
 500 *Know yourself.* Only with true
 Self-knowledge will a man love wisely, pursue the matter
 By exploiting the gifts he's got.
 If nature's made him handsome, let him flash his best profile;
 If smooth-skinned, he should recline
 505 Bare-shouldered. The brilliant talker can fill in those awkward
 Silences; the good singer should sing,
 The good drinker—drink. But brilliant declamations
 And highflown poetic recitals are out of place
 In common-or-garden discourse.' Such was Apollo's counsel,
 510 Counsel to be obeyed: this god speaks truth.
 Back to my theme, then. Any intelligent lover
 Will win in the end: my techniques
 Are sure to bring him fulfilment. Not every sown furrow
 Repays its investment with interest, not every wind
 515 Blows your wandering ship on course. Lovers get less pleasure
 Than pain: let them steel their hearts
 To endless hardship. As thick as Sicily's swarming
 Bees, or hares on Athos, or the grey
 Olive-tree's clustering yield, or shells on the shore, so many
 520 Are the pains of love: there's gall for us in those pricks.
She's out, they'll announce, although you well may glimpse her
 Somewhere inside. So, she's out,
 You were seeing visions. Suppose she locks the door against

you

Come the promised night? Then doss down

525 On the bare ground. It's dirty? Too bad. Even when some lying

And snotty maid asks, 'What's this

Fellow hanging around for?' still coax door and cruel mistress,

Take off your wreath of roses, hang it up

On the knocker. When she's willing, move in; when she avoids
you,

530 Take yourself off: no gentleman should become

An importunate bore. Why force your mistress to say, 'You

Just can't get rid of old so-and-so'? She won't

Always be set against you. And don't think it demeaning

To endure a girl's blows or curses, to kiss her feet.

535 Why waste time over trifles? My mind's on greater matters,

Great themes will I tackle—your full

Attention, please, reader! The task will be arduous—but no
credit

Otherwise: hard and exacting the toil

My art demands. Bear patiently with a rival, and victory

540 Will be yours, you'll triumph in the end.

Take this not as mere human opinion, believe it rather

Prophetic utterance: nothing in my art

Is of greater importance. Put up with her flirtations,

Leave her billets-doux alone, let her come or go

As she pleases. Husbands allow this latitude to lawful

Wives—they nod off, let sleep assist the fun.

545 At this game, I must confess, I fall short of perfection,

But what to do? I just can't follow my own

Instructions. What, sit by while someone's making passes

550 At my girl? Let that go, not blow my top?

Her own incumbent, as I remember, had kissed her: I resented

The kisses: my love abounds with wild

Uncivilized instincts (a fault that has caused me trouble
 On more than one occasion). Wiser the man
 555 Who oils doors for his rivals. But it's best to know nothing,
 Let guilty secrets be hidden; don't make her confess,
 Spare her blushes. Observe, you young blades, don't catch out
 your girls: no,
 Let them cheat you—and while they're cheating, believe
 They've eluded discovery. Passion's fanned by detection,
 560 A guilty pair revealed will always persist
 In the love that undid them. Take one famous example –
 Vulcan's crafty snaring of Mars
 And Venus. Driven wild by a frantic passion
 For the goddess, Mars was transformed
 565 From grim captain to lover. Nor did Venus play the rustic
 And hold out against his entreaties: there's no
 Goddess more willing. Ah, the times she mocked her
 husband's
 Limp, the wanton, or his hands, made hard
 By toil at the forge and bellows! To ape him in Mars' presence
 570 Lent her chic, gave added charm
 To her beauty. At first they concealed their adulterous
 Meetings: guilt blushed, shame kept
 The affair quite dark. But who could deceive the Sun? He
 Saw all—and told Vulcan what acts
 575 His wife was performing. Sun, that's a bad example
 You set there. Just ask, she'll oblige
 You too in return for your silence. So Vulcan set hidden
 Snares round and over the bed (no eye
 Could detect them), then put about he was off to Lemnos. The
 lovers
 580 Met as arranged, were trapped
 In the toils, lay naked: tableau. Then Vulcan invited

All the gods round. Venus came close to tears –
 She and Mars couldn't cover their faces, couldn't even
 Move a hand to their private parts.
 585 Someone laughed and said: 'If you find your chains a burden,
 Brave Mars, transfer them to me!'

At Neptune's urging, reluctantly, Vulcan released them:
 Venus ran off to Paphos, Mars to Thrace.
 So much for Vulcan's plotting: once their shameful
 590 Secret was out, the lovers did as they pleased
 Without thought for concealment. Later Vulcan admitted
 His folly, they say, and would curse the fatal skill
 He'd deployed to catch them. So, be warned by the fate of
 Venus,
 Don't set up the kind of snare
 595 *She* had to endure. Don't organize traps for your rivals,
 Don't intercept secret letters—that's a job
 More proper to husbands (if they reckon such correspondence
 Worth interception). Once more, let me repeat,
 There's no sport here that isn't legitimate, no long-skirted
 600 Respectable ladies figure in *my* fun.
 Who'd dare to profane the rites of Ceres, who would publish
 The high mysteries held on Samothrace? To keep
 Silence is no great virtue, but blurting out religious
 Secrets—that's a most heinous crime.
 605 Garrulous Tantalus, vainly reaching up for apples,
 In water, yet parched with thirst,
 Deserved his fate: Venus expressly commands that her holy
 Rites be kept private. I'm warning you, let no
 Kiss-and-tell gossip come near them. These mysteries may not
 610 Lurk in a box, may not echo to the wild
 Clash of bronze cymbals; yet, though so popular among us,

Among us they still insist
 On concealment. Venus herself, when she poses naked,
 Bends down, places one hand
 615 Over her mons. Brute beasts may couple in public,
 Promiscuously, a sight to make girls blush
 And avert their eyes; but our more furtive passions call for
 Locked doors and bedrooms, we hide
 Our private parts under the bedclothes, and prefer, if not
 darkness,
 620 At least something less than bright
 Noonday, a touch of shadow. In the old days, when sun and
 weather
 Weren't yet kept off by roof-tiles, when oaks
 Provided both food and shelter, love-making was restricted
 To caves or woods. Even these simple folk
 625 Would have blushed to be seen in the act. But now we Haunt
 our prowess
 At such nocturnal pursuits, pay a high price
 Just for the kick of bragging. Will you give every girl in town
 the
 Treatment, just to be able to tell your friends
 'I had her, too'? Will you find some circumstantial scandal
 630 To repeat about each as she's mentioned, never lack
 For a victim to point at? That's mild, though: some fabricate
 stories
 They'd deny if true, claim there's no
 Woman they haven't slept with. If they cannot touch girls'
 Bodies, they'll smear their names: though the flesh
 escape
 635 Defilement, reputation is tarnished. So, bar the lady's chamber,
 You crabby old doorkeeper, fix on a hundred bolts –
 What's left secure when her name's fair game for 'adulterers'
 Who work to convince the world of what never took

place?

Myself, I remain discreet about my erotic encounters

640 Even when they're true: keep such secrets under seal.

Take care not to criticize girls for their shortcomings: many

Have found it advantageous to pretend

Such things didn't exist. Andromeda's dusky complexion

Left wing-footed Perseus silent. Although

645 Everyone else thought Andromache too large a woman,

To Hector alone she looked

Just the right size. Habit breeds tolerance: a long-established

Love will condone much, whereas

At first it's all-sensitive. While a new graft's growing

650 In the green cortex, a light

Breeze can detach it; but soon, time-strengthened, the tree will

Outface all winds, hold firm,

Bear adopted fruit. Time heals each physical blemish,

The erstwhile flaw will fade:

655 Young nostrils cannot abide the stink of tanning leather,

But age inures them to it, after a while

They don't even notice the smell. Labels minimize feelings –

She's blacker than pitch? Try 'brunette'.

If she squints, compare her to Venus. She croaks? She's

Minerva!

660 A living skeleton? 'Svelte' is the word. Call her 'trim'

When she's minuscule, or 'plumpish' when she's a Fat Lady –

Use proximate virtues to camouflage each fault.

Don't ask her age, don't inquire under just which consul

She was born–leave that kind of chore

665 To the Censor's office, especially if she's past her girlish

Prime, and already plucking those first

White hairs. Such ladies, in this (or even a higher) age-group

Are good value, a field worth sowing, ready to bear.*

- 675 Besides, they possess a wider range of knowledge
And experience, the sole source
Of true skill: they make up for their years with sophistication,
Camouflaging their age through art; they know
A thousand postures—name yours—for making love in,
680 More ways than any pillow-book could reveal.
They need no stimuli to warm up their passions –
Men and women should share the same
Pleasures. I hate it unless both lovers reach a climax:
That's why I don't much go for boys.
- 685 I can't stand a woman who puts out because she has to,
Who lies there dry as a bone
With her mind on her knitting. Pleasure by way of duty
Holds no charms for me, I don't want
Any dutiful martyrs. I love the sighs that betray their rapture,
690 That beg me to go slow, to keep it up
Just a little longer. It's great when my mistress comes,
eyes swooning,
Then collapses, can't take any more
For a long while. Such joys attend you in your thirties:
Nature does not bestow them on green youth.
- 695 For the hasty, new-bottled wine; for me, a vintage
Laid down long years before.
Only an ageing plane-tree can block the sunlight,
Bare feet are crippled by a new-grown field.
Would you rate Helen's daughter Hermione over Helen? Was
Medusa
700 An improvement on *her* mother? Any man
Willing to get involved with mature passions,
And to stay the course, will win a worthwhile prize.
So the bed, as though consciously, has received its two lovers.

And the door is shut. Muse, you must wait outside:

705 They don't need you, now, to prompt their whispered
endearments,

 Their hands won't be idle, fingers will learn
What to do in those hidden parts where Love's unnoticed
 Darts transfix the flesh.

Andromache got this treatment from most valiant Hector –

710 His talents extended beyond war:

Captive Briseis was handled thus by the great Achilles,
 Who came, battle-weary, to her soft bed.

Those hands, Briseis, you let those bloody hands caress you
 Though daily they claimed their stint

715 Of Phrygian dead. Or was that just what you found so exciting

–
 The hands of a conqueror on your limbs?
Believe me, love's acme of pleasure must not be hurried,
 But drawn insensibly on—and when you've found
Those places a woman adores to have touched up, don't let
any

720 Feeling of shame prevent you, go right in.

You'll see that tremulous glint in her eyes, like the dazzle
 Of sunlight on a lake;

She'll moan and gasp, murmur words of sweet endearment
 Well matched to the sport you're playing, heave soft

sighs.

725 But take care not to cram on sail and outrace your mistress,
 Or let *her* overtake *you*; both should pass

The winning-post neck and neck—that's the height of pleasure,
 When man and woman lie knocked out at once.

This is the pace you should keep when time's no object,

730 And your stolen pleasures take no prick from fear;

When delay isn't safe, though, it helps to press on regardless,
 Step up the strike-rate, spur that galloping horse.

669 While strength and age permit it, keep at such labours:
670 Bent age will come soon enough
671 On stealthy feet. Cleave the sea with oars, the soil with a
ploughshare,
672 Turn your fierce hands to war –
673 Or expend your strength and toil and vigour on women:
674 This too is military service, this too needs sweat.

733 My task is ended: give me the palm, you grateful
Young lovers, wreath myrtle in my scented hair!
735 As great as Podalirius was among the Achaeans
For his healing arts, or Achilles for his strength,
Or Nestor in counsel, or Calchas as prophet, or Ajax
In arms, or Automedon as charioteer,
So great am I at the love-game. Sing my praises, declare me
740 Your prophet and poet, young men: let my name
Be broadcast world-wide. As Vulcan made arms for Achilles,
So have I done for you: then use
My gift, as he did, to conquer! And when you've brought
down your
Amazon, write on the trophy *Ovid was my guide*.
745 Now the girls (hullo there!) are begging me for lessons:
The next part of this poem will be yours.

BOOK 3

I've armed Greeks against Amazons: now I must fashion
weapons

For Penthesilea and her girls.

A well matched fight is best, with victory granted

Through the favour of kind

5 Venus, and Venus' earth-girdling son. Unfair for naked

Ladies to meet armed troops: a victory gained that way

Would disgrace our gallants. 'But why lend venom to
serpents?'

I hear you ask, 'why betray a fold of sheep

To the ravening she-wolf ?' Don't pin the evil reputation

10 Of one or two on them all, judge each girl by

Her own proper merits. It's true that Helen and Clytemnestra

Must face sisterly charges from both

The sons of Atreus; it's true that what Eriphyle plotted

Sent Amphiaraus and his horses down,

15 Still living, to Styx; yet Penelope stayed constant

For ten years, while her husband was at the wars,

And ten more of his wanderings. Look at Protesilaus

And Laodameia—who cut short her span on earth

To follow the man she loved. Alcestis redeemed Admetus'

20 Life by pledging her own, was borne to the grave

In his stead Evadne cried, 'Ah take me, Capaneus!

We'll mingle our ashes,' and sprang

On to the pyre. Virtue herself, by name and fashion,

Is a lady: naturally she has her own

25 Followers to please, though my art doesn't call for such strict

Principles—my little craft

Can manage with smaller sails. Only wanton passions

Are learnt through me, I'll teach

How a woman should be courted. You seldom see the ladies
 30 Using bows and flaming arrows on their men –
 Men are often deceivers, girls hardly ever: inquiries
 Will prove the feminine cheat
 A rare bird indeed. Medea, already a mother, was dumped by
 Perfidious Jason for another bride,
 35 And as far as Theseus knew, deserted Ariadne
 Had long been food for gulls
 On that lonely beach. How did Nine Ways get its title?
 How did the very woods come to shed their leaves
 And weep for Phyllis? Remember that guest with the
 reputation
 40 For *piety*? *He* left poor Dido a sword –
 And a motive for suicide. What ruined all these ladies?
 Erotic ineptitude, lack of technique. It takes
 Technique to make love last—and they’d *still* be inept, had
 Venus
 Not appeared to me in a vision, made it clear
 45 That my job was to teach them. ‘Poor girls,’ she said, ‘what
 have *they* done,
 Weak defenceless lot, to be thrown
 To the armed male wolves? Two books you’ve written
 instructing
 Men in the game: high time the opposite sex
 Got benefit from your counsels. Stesichorus cursed Helen
 50 To begin with, but ended—better luck for him –
 Singing her praises. If I know you, you’ll be seeking their
 favour
 Till the day you die—so don’t go mean on them now.’
 With that she gave me a leaf from the garland of myrtle
 Binding her hair, and a few
 55 Of the berries. Taking them, I sensed her numinous
 Power: air shone more brightly, my heart

Rose buoyant and carefree. While my inspiration lasts, then,
Take lessons from me, girls (those of you whom the law,
And modesty, and your code, will permit): be mindful of
creeping

60 Old age, don't waste precious time –
Have fun while you can, in your salad days; the years glide
Past like a moving stream,
And the water that's gone can never be recovered,
The lost hour never returns.

65 Use your youth to the full: youth vanishes too swiftly,
And what follows can never match
That first freshness. The beds of violets I remember
Are withered weeds now; these thorns
Once shaped some charming garland. There'll come a time
when

70 You who today lock out your lovers will lie
Old and cold and alone in bed, your door never broken
Open at brawling midnight, never at dawn
Scattered roses bright on your threshold! Too soon—ah
horror!—

Flesh goes slack and wrinkled, the clear
75 Complexion is lost, those white streaks you swear date back to
Your schooldays suddenly spread,
You're grey-haired. A snake husks off old age with its fragile
Discarded skin; cast horns
Leave the stag in its prime. Unaided, a woman's charms will
80 Vanish away. Pluck the flower; left unplucked
It will wither and fall. Youth's span is shortened yet further
By childbirth: overcropping ages a field.

Endymion on Latmos brought no blush to the Moon, nor was
Cephalus

A prize for which Aurora, the roseate Dawn,
85 Felt any shame. Though mourning Venus be granted

Her Adonis, who was it sired
 Harmonia and Aeneas? So, mortal women, follow
 The goddesses' example, don't deny
 Such pleasures to eager lovers. They'll deceive you? Why
 worry?
 90 Life holds firm. Let them come to the well
 A thousand times, nothing's lost. Iron and flint are diminished,
 Worn down by use, but *that part*
 Endures without fear of loss. Who'd forbid us to kindle
 Our lamp from a proffered flame, who'd hoard
 95 The boundless deep at sea? So why should any woman
 Say 'No'? Tell me why—all you waste
 Is douche-water. I'm not encouraging promiscuous conduct,
 Just warning you not be scared
 Of shadows. Your favours forfeit you nothing. We're still in
 harbour –
 100 Let me catch the light breeze, leave strong winds for
 outside.
 I begin with self-cultivation: you get the best vintage
 From well-cared-for grapes, the wheat
 Grows tallest in well-dug fields. True beauty's a gift of
 The gods, few can boast they possess it—and most
 105 Of you, my dears, don't. Hard work will improve the picture:
 Neglect your looks, and they'll go to pot, even though
 You're a second Venus. Young girls didn't cultivate their
 persons
 In the old days, true; but they didn't have cultured men
 110 To live up to. Andromache wore a simple smock of sacking,
 And why not? She was the wife
 Of a rough soldier. If you'd been married to Ajax, would you
 Dress Up for a man who went around behind
 Seven layers of oxhide? Crude simplicity's old-fashioned,

Rome's all gold now, possesses the vast wealth

115 Of the conquered world. Consider the Capitol, past and
present—

You'd think today's version belonged

To a different god. Our Senate (august assembly!) now boasts

A worthy chamber—first built, in Tatius' reign,

Of wattle and daub. The Palatine, where Apollo and our
princes

120 Now lord it, once pastured oxen for the plough.

Let others worship the past; I much prefer the present,

Am delighted to be alive today—not for

The stubborn gold we mine, or the rare shells gathered

For our delight from foreign shores,

125 Not for the marble quarried from crumbling mountains, the
palaces

Pier-built over the bay, but for

Refinement and culture, which have banished the tasteless

Crudities of our ancestors. So, don't burden your ears

With precious pearls, once dived for by dusky natives

130 In green tropic seas; don't come out

Wearing dresses that sag with the weight of the gold sewn on
them:

Wealth displayed to allure us may often repel.

What attracts us is elegance—so don't neglect your hairstyle;

Looks can be made or marred by a skilful touch.

135 Nor will one style suit all: there are innumerable fashions,

And each girl should look in her glass

Before choosing what suits her reflection. Long features go
best with

A plain central parting: that's how

Laodamia's hair was arranged. A round-faced lady

140 Should pile all her hair on top,

Leaving the ears exposed. One girl should wear it down on

Her shoulders, like Apollo about to play
 The lyre; another should braid it in the style of the huntress
 Diana, when she's after some frightened beast,
 145 Skirt hitched up. Some need to keep it loose and windswept,
 Others to pin it back;
 Some like tortoiseshell combs, some prefer to brush it
 Out in soft flowing waves –
 But you can't count all the acorns on an oak's branches,
 150 Or Hybla's bees, or wild beasts in the Alps,
 And *I* can't be comprehensive about hair-fashions
 When every day brings out a chic new style.
 Besides, the Neglected Look suits many girls: quite often
 You'd think it untouched since yesterday, though in fact
 155 It's fresh-combed. Art simulates chance. When Heracles
 entered that fallen
 City, and caught one glimpse of Iole's wild curls,
 'That's the girl for me,' he exclaimed. So wind-blown Ariadne
 Was whirled off by Bacchus, to loud cheers
 From his satyrs. Nature's too kind to feminine beauty,
 160 Women have so many ways to offset defects!
 We men are stripped bare, relentlessly; just as a north wind
 Brings down the leaves, so our hair
 Falls out with age. But a woman can use imported rinses
 To touch up those white streaks, produce
 165 A better-than-natural tint; a woman goes out in a built-up
 Purchased postiche, replaces her own hair
 With a wig, cash down—and unblushingly: boutiques display
 them
 Under Hercules' nose, right beside the Muses' shrine.
 A word, I suppose, about dress. I have no time for flounces,
 170 Or purple-dyed woollen fabrics: when you've the choice
 Of so many cheaper colours, it's just plain madness

To carry such an investment on your back.

There's pale sky-blue, like the cloudless vault of heaven

On a warm spring day, with no

175 Western breeze blowing up rain; or light gold, like the rescuer

Of Phrixus and Helle from Ino's deep-sea wiles,

Or the colour that's like a wave, sea-green, named after

The deep itself—fit garb

For the Nymphs. There's saffron: the dewy dawn-goddess is
veiled in

180 A saffron robe as she drives up her light-

Bringing horses; there's myrtle-leaf, there's amethyst-purple,

Rose-white, the grey of a Thracian crane,

Chestnut (your turn, Amaryllis), almond-blossom, the beeswax

Brown of a fleece—as many as or more

185 Than the flowers that blossom in springtime, when warm
weather

Puts buds on the vines, when barren winter's fled,

Are the dyes that wool will imbibe. So pick the right ones:

Not all of them go well on every girl.

Dark grey suits pale complexions: grey suited Briseïs –

190 She even wore grey into captivity.

A swarthy skin does better in white: Andromeda's white-clad

Beauty drove jealous gods to punish her island home.

I was about to warn you against rank goatish armpits

And bristling hair on your legs,

195 But I'm not instructing hillbilly girls from the Caucasus,

Or Mysian river-hoydens—so what need

To remind *you* not to let your teeth get all discoloured

Through neglect, or forget to wash

Your hands every morning? You know how to brighten your
complexion

200 With powder, add rouge to a bloodless face,

Skilfully block in the crude outline of an eyebrow,

Stick a patch on one flawless cheek.

You don't shrink from lining your eyes with dark mascara

Or a touch of Cilician saffron. My little tract

205 *On Facial Treatment* lists the most effective preparations –

It may be short, but no end

Of hard work went into it, it's full of tips for restoring

Faded beauty: my art is active on your behalf.

But don't let your lover find all those jars and bottles

210 On your dressing-table: the best

Make-up remains unobtrusive. A face so thickly plastered

With pancake it runs down your sweaty neck

Is bound to create repulsion. And that goo from unwashed
fleeces –

Athenian maybe, but my dear, the *smell!* –

215 That's used for face-cream: avoid it. When you have company

Don't dab stuff on your pimples, don't start cleaning
your

teeth:

The result may be attractive, but the *process* is sickening –

Much that is vile in the doing gives pleasure when done.

A statue-signed, let's say, by that industrious sculptor

220 Myron–began as a mere lump

Of deadweight marble; the gold for your ring must first be

Worked and shaped, your woollen dress was made

From greasy yarn; that splendid representation of Venus

Posed naked, wringing out her seawet hair,

225 Was a rough and uncut stone once. So leave us to imagine

You're asleep while you're at your toilet: only emerge

When the public picture's complete. I don't want to know how

That complexion's built up. Shut your door,

Don't reveal the half-finished process. Most of your actions

230 Would offend if you didn't conceal them: there's a lot
 Men are better not knowing. Look closely at those splendid
 Gold statues adorning the theatre—thin gilded foil
 On a wooden frame! That's why the public can't come near
 them
 Till they're finished—and that's why you
 235 Should keep men out while you're making up. Still, I don't
 forbid you
 To let them watch you comb your rippling hair
 Out down your back—but mind you don't lose your temper
 As you tear at those tangled knots!
 Don't vent your spleen on your lady's-maid: I detest a girl who
 240 Claws the poor creature's face, or stabs
 Her arm with a needle. The victim will curse her mistress'
 head while
 She dresses it, and, while she bleeds, drop tears
 Over the hated tresses. If you've difficult hair, keep a guard on
 Your boudoir door—or have your styling done
 245 In a ladies-only temple! I once called on some woman who
 wasn't
 Expecting me. In her flurry she fixed her wig
 On back to front. May such cause for embarrassment undo
 only
 My enemies! May this disgrace afflict none but wild
 Parthian girls! There's nothing so ugly as hornless cattle,
 250 Bald fields, bare bushes—or a head sans hair.

 Who are my clients? Not Semele, not Leda, not Phoenician
 Europa, cruising off on that pseudo-bull's
 Broad back, or Helen (understandably, Menelaus
 Wanted her back; understandably, Paris kept
 255 His prize for himself). It's the ordinary run of women,
 Pretty or plain, who consult me (the plain
 Always outnumber the pretty). What help or instruction

Do beauties require from art? They have their own
 Potent dowry—natural good looks. When it's calm, the captain
 260 Relaxes; but in a storm all hands are piped.
 A flawless face is a rarity: mask each blemish,
 Hide your physical faults—as far as you can.
 Sit, if you're short, lest standing you seem to be sitting;
 Stretch out that pint-sized form,
 265 Recline on a couch (but discourage rude measurement by
 spreading
 A wrap or blanket across your legs).
 The over-lean girl should wear more amply textured
 Dresses, a robe that's draped
 Loose from her shoulders. Puce stripes offset a pallid
 270 Complexion, while Nilotic linen transforms
 The swarthy. Got ugly feet? Just keep them hidden
 In smart white bootees. Scrawny calves? Don't raise
 Your skirt above the ankle. Protruding collar-bones? Mask
 them
 With pads. Is your trouble a flat bust?
 275 Wear a good bra. If you have rough nails, coarse fingers,
 Don't gesture too much while you talk.
 Bad breath? You should never converse on an empty stomach
 And keep your mouth well back from your lover's face!
 If your teeth are decayed, or horsy, or protruding,
 280 A guffaw can cost you dear. Believe it or not,
 Girls even learn how to laugh: in their quest for decorum
 This is one more skill they must acquire.
 Don't open the mouth too wide, control those dimples, keep
 your
 Teeth concealed behind your lips.
 285 Don't split your sides with endless hilarity, but rather
 Laugh in a restrained, a ladylike way –

Some women distort their features with lop-sided guffaws,
some

Get so cross-eyed with mirth

You'd swear they were weeping. Others utter a harsh unlovely

290 Braying noise, like a she-ass hitched to the mill.

Where does art not enter? Girls learn / to make even tears
attractive,

To cry when and how they please.

Indeed, some mispronounce words with deliberate affectation,

Bring them lispingly off the tongue:

295 Charm lurks in such errors of consciously faulty diction –

What grace of speech they had they soon unlearn.

These hints are useful, so pay them proper attention –

And mind you learn to walk in a feminine way!

No mean part of elegance derives from gait and carriage:

300 These can attract or repel

Admiring strangers. One girl sways her hips artfully, catches

The breeze with her flowing mantle, points her feet

In short dainty steps; another–like some red-cheeked peasant
housewife –

Clumps and waddles along, with hearty strides.

305 Moderation's best, as so often: don't play the country
bumpkin,

But equally, don't lay your affectations on

Too thick. No harm, though, in baring your left-hand shoulder

And upper arm: for those

With a milk-white skin this works wonders—just let me see it,

310 And I'm mad to press kisses on the naked flesh!

The Sirens, those sea-monsters, with their delectable voices

Would draw in the swiftest ships:

At the sound of them Ulysses almost struggled loose from

The ropes that tied him (his comrades' ears were
stopped

315 With wax). Oh, music's seductive: girls should take singing-
lessons –

For many, it's the voice, and not the face,
That plays bawd. You should know the latest vaudeville
numbers,

The slinkiest hits from the Nile:

Any girl I'd call accomplished must know how to play a

320 Stringed instrument, handle a quill.

Orpheus moved rocks and beasts with his lyre, held Tartarus
spellbound,

Tamed hell's three-headed dog;

When Amphion played (he who so nobly avenged his mother)

The stones of Thebes moved with a will,

325 Sprang into walls. A dolphin, though dumb, responded

To human music—or so the famous tale

Of Arion alleges. Learn to play the two-handed Phoenician

Harp as well, for a party it's ideal.

Have a smattering of the poets—Callimachus, Coan

330 Philetas, wine-flown Anacreon: don't forget

Sappho (what, I ask you, could be more wanton?),

Or Menander's sugar-daddies, always gulled

By some tricky slave. Be able to quote Propertius,

Tibullus, or Gallus, in sentimental mood;

335 Learn passages from epic: the high-flown *Golden*

Fleece by Varrò (poor Helle!), or—what else? –

Virgil's *Aeneid* (those wanderings, great Rome's origins,

The most publicized Latin poem of all time...).

Perhaps, too, my own name will be included

340 Among theirs, and my works escape

Oblivion: maybe some pundit will say: 'Here, read our

Maestro's Polished advice on love (for both sexes), or
choose

Some pieces from the three books of his *Amores*

To declaim in a soft, enchanting voice,
 345 Or, for dramatic recitation, one of the *Heroines'*
Letters—an art-form he invented himself.'
 So grant it, Apollo! You spirits of bygone poets,
 O Bacchus, O Muses, *make it all come true!*
 Of course, I also insist that a girl should be a dancer,
 350 Trained to shimmy delectably while the wine
 Goes round after dinner. Lead actresses, ballerinas,
 These are idolized for their sinuous charms.
 Some minor points I'm almost ashamed to mention: let her
 Know how to play board-games, to roll the bones –
 355 And skilfully, planning her throws in advance, deciding
 At which point to hazard a piece, just when to huff.
 The contest of halma should find her cunning rather than
 reckless
 When her pieces are taken by a two-pronged attack,
 When her fighting men are exposed and struggling, in
 isolation,
 360 Against a foe who comes back, and back again,
 At her weakest point. She should have a sure hand for
 jackstraws –
 Lift endless spillikins, never disturb the pile.
 Then there's that other piece-game, the kind of backgammon
 Played on a twelve-point board (twelve points,
 365 Twelve months in the year), or merels—like noughts and crosses
 With marbles—three in a row to win.
 Countless pastimes await you—too bad if a girl doesn't
 Know how to play: games often provide a quick
 Lead-in to love. But using your throws to the best advantage
 370 Is of minor importance: what matters is self-control.
 This is when we lack caution, when our very zest betrays us,
 And our true self shows naked—all for a game!

Ugly anger creeps up on us, lust for a cash killing,
 Quarrels and brawls, anxiety, despair;
 375 Accusations fly to and fro, the air's acclamour, angry
 Gods are invoked all round; but there's no
 Trusting those tables. The things / that players will pray for!
 They'll even
 Quite often (I've seen them) dissolve in tears.
 If you want men to find you attractive, may the gods in
 heaven
 380 Keep you well clear of all such disgusting tricks!
 These, then, are the sports that indolent nature has given
 To women. Men have a richer choice:
 They can play fast handball, throw the javelin or discus,
 Fence in armour, show-jump a horse. But you
 385 Ladies aren't seen in the Field of Mars, you don't use the
 athletes'
 Cold baths, you don't swim in the Tiber. Where
 You can stroll to your profit, of a scorching August noonday,
 Is under those shady arches down Pompey's colonnade;
 Visit the Palatine, sacred to belauded Apollo
 390 (Whose power sank Cleopatra's fleet);
 See the monuments raised by our Leader's wife and sister,
 See his son-in-law, head wreathed with naval renown!
 Genuflect at the incense-wreathed altars of the Memphian
 Cow, visit all three theatres (get front-row seats);
 395 Patronize the Circus, see hot blood splash the arena,
 Watch a close-run chariot-race.
 Out of sight's out of mind; what you don't know you
 can't covet –
 Fruitless, the pretty face that goes alone.
 Though you can out-sing every legendary prima donna,
 400 Music unheard gives little joy.

If Apelles of Cos had never contrived that pose for Venus

She'd still be hidden deep

Under the ocean. What else do our dedicated poets

Pursue but fame? This is the goal of all

405 Our labours. Poets were once the chosen of gods and
monarchs:

In olden times their choirs

Won great rewards; high honour, a venerable title,

These a bard had—plus large

And regular cash donations. Take Ennius: born a Calabrian

410 Peasant, yet interred in the Scipio family vault

Because of his art. Today, though, the ivy lies unhonoured,

And a life of poetic toil

Gets you labelled a drone. Still, to slave for recognition

Does help. If the *Iliad*, that immortal work,

415 Had never been published, who'd have heard of Homer –

Or of Danaë, if she'd reached old age still shut

Away in her tower? You pretty girls need your public,

So mind you parade round the town

As often as you can make it. The wolf, to seize one sheep, will

420 Pursue the whole flock; an eagle plummets down

Into a flight of birds. So, the beauty must court her public –

Perhaps, among so many, she'll find one man

Worth attracting. To get run after means full time on the party

Circuit, means concentrating her whole

425 Mind on projecting that glamour. Besides, luck's a constant

Factor, so keep your hook dangling: you'll take a fish

From the stream you'd least expect. Often hounds will range
the mountain

Thickets in vain,—and then a stag will plunge

Into the toils undriven. Could shackled Andromeda ever

430 Have dreamt her tears would attract a lover? But then

Loose hair and abandoned weeping are sexy: her husband's funeral

Is often where your widow looks out for the next man.

But keep clear of smart young beaux who make elegance a profession,

Flaunt handsome profiles, are always fixing their hair:

435 The tale they tell you they've told to a thousand girls already,

They're fancy-free, never stick to a constant love.

What's a woman to do when her lover's smoother than she is,

And probably has more men on the side as well?

It's hard to believe, but true, that Troy would still be standing

440 If the Trojans had followed poor Cassandra's advice.

Some make their assault behind a false mask of passion, use such

Approaches to snatch—at shameful gain:

Don't be deceived by their hair, all sleek and perfumed,

Their tight-laced shoe-tongues, the stuff

445 Of their togas, so finely textured, the rings that glitter –

One, two, or more—on their fingers. The most

Elegant dandy among them may well be a sneak-thief

Consumed with love for your dress,

Not your person. "That's mine, give it back!" the victims clamour,

450 Give it back!', while the public square

Re-echoes their complaints, while Venus from her gilded

Temple, and from their fountain the Appian nymphs

Look on unmoved. Some men have notorious reputations,

Many have ditched a mistress. Learn in time

455 From some other girl's cries of distress to beware the prospect

Of getting distressed yourself. Don't open that door

To some treacherous male. Don't believe the perjured oaths of Theseus,

Athenian maids: those deities he invokes

He long since forswore. And his son Demophoön, heir to
 460 Bad blood and broken faith—what girl would trust *him*
 After he'd left poor Phyllis? Match promise with promise;
 If they keep their word, then you
 Can come through too. That girl could snuff the undying
 Vestal
 Fire, loot Isis' temple of its sacred gear,
 465 Or slip her lover a mixture of aconite and hemlock –
 Who denies her favours *after* taking gifts!

 I must concentrate my theme more. Muse, rein in there,
 Quit your headlong gallop down the course!

 A lover should pave the way with letters: make sure you detail
 470 A trustworthy maid to act as your go-between.
 Examine each message, deduce from his own expressions
 Whether it's faked, or written with genuine
 Heartfelt distress. Wait a little before you reply: a lover's
 Honed up by delay—provided it's not too long.
 475 Don't yield too easily to a lover's entreaties,
 But, equally, don't overdo
 Those stubborn refusals. Scare him, yet leave him hopeful;
 Let each letter reduce his fear, increase his hopes.
 A girl should write elegantly, but in everyday language –
 480 Familiar phrases have their own appeal.
 How often a hesitant lover takes fire from letters –
 And how often a barbarous style
 Will undo the prettiest writer! Even though you're not married
 You're anxious to fool your men,
 485 So have slave-boy or handmaid write your letters for you,
 Don't compromise yourself with each new beau;
 489 Only a cad, it's true, would hang on to such proofs of passion –
 490 I'But as evidence they pack a thunderbolt punch.

487 I've seen girls, pale with terror, submitting, wretched
creatures,

488 To blackmail for life, all because of a letter. In my view
To counter fraud by fraud is permitted—the law will sanction
Arms for self-defence against an armed attack.

So practise writing in a number of different

Hands (bad cess to those who make such advice

495 Essential!), and take care, always, to erase the wax completely
Before you use it: avoid any legible trace

Of a previous message. Transmute the sex of your lover

Whenever you mention him: write 'her' instead.

Now, if I may, I'll turn from such lesser matters

500 To more serious themes, spread full my swelling sails.

A pretty face should control mad fits of temper: radiant

Peace is for men, raw fury marks the beast.

Anger swells up your countenance: veins throb and darken

With pulsing blood, an ultra-Gorgonish fire

505 Darts from your eyes. When Pallas looked into the river,

And saw her puckered expression, 'Away with you,

flute!'

She cried, 'You're not worth it!' Take a glass to your tantrums,

And which of you would recognize your own

Familiar features? It does just as much harm to look haughty –

510 A gentle expression will best

Encourage love. I detest—and believe me, I know it—the over-

Disdainful air: too often a silent face

Holds the seeds of hatred. Return his smiles and glances;

If he beckons, acknowledge the gesture with a nod.

515 After such foreplay Cupid, the foils abandoned, empties

His quiver of its keen darts.

What else? Glum girls are a bore. Leave Ajax to love
Tecmessa:

We men are a cheerful breed, it's bright
 Girls who best charm us—if I were choosing a mistress
 520 Andromache or Tecmessa would never be *my* choice;
 I find it hard to believe they ever slept with their masters
 (Though their parturitions inform me I must be wrong).
 Could that dreary woman, I ask you, have ever called Ajax
 'My darling', or warmed his heart with lovers' words?
 525 Who'll veto my trick of using great matters as examples
 To illustrate small? Why shun the Leader's name?
 Just as our good Leader makes X a squadron-commander,
 Y a centurion, entrusts the colours to Z,
 So do you, too, consider how we can serve your advantage,
 530 Then place each one of us in his proper slot!
 Let the rich man give you presents, the professional lawyer
 Be on call to defend you in court with skill
 And eloquence: we, the poets, should stick to sending you
 poems –
 As a group, we're pre-eminent at dealing with love.
 535 Far and wide we can broadcast the loved one's beauty: think
 of
 Nemesis, Cynthia—both household names!
 Lands in the East and West all know of Lycoris; countless
 People keep asking me who my Corinna is.
 What's more, there's no place in a poet for stratagems and
 deceptions:
 540 Vocation and art combine to fashion forth
 His essential nature. We stay untouched by ambition or love
 of profit,
 Despise the forum, prefer a couch in the shade.
 But we're easily hooked, we burn with vehement passions,
 And know—too well—how to give
 545 Unswerving love. Our natures are made more pliant
 By our gentle art: an attitude to life

Grows from our studies. So, girls, be generous with poets:

They're the Muses' darlings, contain

A divine spark. God is in us, we have dealings with heaven:

550 Our inspiration descends

From celestial realms. It's a crime to look for presents

To such skilled bards—but a crime (I very much fear)

Which no girl shuns. But don't look openly rapacious,

Dissemble a little: if he glimpses the net

555 A raw lover will balk. No horseman would use the same
bridle

On a fresh-broken colt and a well-

Trained hack; nor should you follow the same methods

To capture stable maturity and green youth.

This raw recruit, a novice in Love's campaigns, who's made it

—
560 Your latest victim—through the bedroom door,

Make sure he knows you alone, cleaves to none other:

Plant high hedges all around

So tender a crop. Shun rivals: just keep him to yourself and

You'll win the day. Love, like a king's throne,

565 Cannot share its rights. Your old soldier will come to loving

Cautiously, by degrees, will put up with much

No recruit would endure; will not break down doors, or burn
them;

Will not go for a mistress's soft

Cheeks with his nails, will not rip up her (or his) clothing,

570 Will not make her weep by tearing out her hair.

Such things may be expected from young blades hot in
passion;

But a veteran will bear the worst of wounds

With steadfast heart, will burn with slow-smouldering heat,
like

Damp hay, or green timber freshly cut

575 On the mountain slopes. His love is more sure; the other
richer,

But brief—pluck such transient fruit before it's gone!

We've unbolted the gates to the foe: let's make a general

Surrender, in faithless betrayal keep our faith.

What's easily given ill nourishes any long-term passion –

580 You should mix in the odd rebuff

With your cheerful fun. Shut him out of the house, let him
wait there

Cursing that locked front door, let him plead

And threaten all he's a mind to. Sweetness cloyes the palate,

Bitter juice is a freshener. Often a small skiff

585 Is sunk by favouring winds: it's their husbands' access to them,

At will, that deprives so many wives of love.

Let her put in a door, with a hard-faced porter to tell him

'Keep out', and he'll soon be touched with desire

Through frustration. Put down your blunt foils, fight with
sharpened weapons

590 (I don't doubt that my own shafts

Will be turned against me). When a new-captured lover

Is stumbling into the toils, then let him believe

He alone has rights to your bed—but later, make him conscious

Of rivals, of shared delights. Neglect

595 These devices—his ardour will wane. A racehorse runs most
strongly

When the field's ahead, to be paced

And passed. So the dying embers of passion can be fanned to

Fresh flame by some outrage—I can only love,

Myself, I confess it, when wronged. But don't let the cause of

600 Pain be too obvious: let a lover suspect

More than he knows. Invent a slave who watches your every

Movement, make clear what a jealous martinet

That man of yours is—such things will excite him. Pleasure

Too safely enjoyed lacks zest. You want to be free

605 As Thai's? Act scared. Though the door's quite safe, let him in
by

The window. Look nervous. Have a smart

Maid rush in, scream 'We're caught!', while you bundle the
quaking

Youth out of sight. But be sure

To offset his fright with some moments of carefree pleasure –

610 Or he'll think a night with you isn't worth the risk.

I was going to omit the ways of eluding a crafty husband

Or vigilant guard—let the bride

Respect her husband, let brides be guarded securely: that's
proper:

Modesty, law, and our Leader so prescribe.

615 But watch *you*? A woman still scarcely used to her freedom?

Intolerable! Let me instruct you in all

The ways of deceit, and then (if you're properly determined)

With as many watchers around you as Argus had eyes

You'll outsmart them all. Can a guard stop you writing letters

620 When you're shut in the bathroom? Will he find

All the places where your girl-accomplice can hide them—
tablets

Snugly tucked in her bra,

A package of papers strapped to one calf, a seductive message

Slipped between sandal and foot?

If such tricks become known to the guardian, use your
confidante's

625 Body for paper, scribble a note on her back.

Then there's invisible writing, in milk: when you want to read
it

Just spread powdered carbon over the wax –

A reliable deception. Or write in moist oil of linseed:

630 The seemingly blank tablet will preserve
Your hidden words. Think of Danaë's father, and all the
trouble

He took to protect his daughter—yet she contrived
To make him a grandfather. The city's full of theatres,
Girls love the races—what

635 Can a guardian do? Say she worships Egyptian Isis,
And goes where no watchful male
May follow, clashing her sistrum? What about the Good
Goddess,

Banning men from her temple (except her own
Chosen adherents)? The public baths provide plenty of private

640 Fun for girls—while their guardians sit outside

In charge of their clothes. How cope with the sharp girlfriend
Who's 'ill' on demand (but never too ill to vacate
Her bed for the length of a visit)? How counter those duplicate
And duplicitous passkeys? How block the door—and all

645 Those other ways in? A guardian's wits can be fuddled

With plenty of wine—cheap stuff,
Any Spanish rotgut, will do. There are knockout potions,
Drugs to induce deep sleep,

Or your confidante can seduce the hateful creature,

650 Keep him occupied, spin out time.
But what's the point of such unimportant digressions, when
any

Guard can be bought with a trifling bribe?
Bribes—believe me—will purchase gods no less than mortals:
Even Jupiter can be placated by gifts.

655 What's the wise man to do? When fools enjoy such presents

Why not accept the offering, hold your tongue?
But you'll need to purchase your guardian on a long-term
basis:

The favours he bestows he'll repeat *ad lib*.

I remember once complaining that you had to watch out for

660 Your friends: it's not men alone

To whom this applies. If you show yourself over-trustful,

Other women will reap your pleasures: the hare

You started, they'll hunt. Watch that girl with the spare
bedroom

Who's so eager to help you—believe me, I've

665 Been in there more than once. And don't have a maid who's
too pretty –

She's often usurped her mistress's role with me –

I must be crazy going on like this. Why charge bare-breasted

670 Against the foe? Why testify to my own

Betrayal? Game birds don't notify the fowler

Where he can take them; no hind sets a savage pack

On her own trail –

Damn advantage! I'll stick to my purpose,

Arm the girls with Lemnian swords, expose my heart

To their thrusts. Just make us believe we're loved—a simple

Assignment: desire is quick to kindle faith

675 In what it seeks. Let a woman glance sweetly at her lover,

Sigh deeply, ask him why he's so late,

Then start crying, pretend to be cross about some rival,

Claw his face with her nails –

That'll convince him in no time, he'll soon start feeling

680 Sorry for her, say 'Why, the poor little thing,

She's just crazy about me!' And if he's smart, if his mirror

Flatters his profile, then (he thinks) goddesses too

Will compete for his favours. But however badly he wrongs
you,

Don't look put out. When there's talk of some other girl,

685 Keep calm, don't jump to conclusions: just how dangerous

Can be, the story of Procris should demonstrate.

High under flowery Hymettus' violet hillside

Flows a sacred spring: soft earth,

Lush turf, a little spinney of trailing arbutus,

690 Dark myrtle, rosemary, scented bay,

Thick-burgeoning boxwood, the brittle tamarisk, slender

Lucerne, domestic pines, a gentle stir

And rustle of warm spring breezes through that variegated

Leafage, an airy caress blown over the grass.

695 Here Cephalus came to enjoy his siesta, hounds and huntsmen

Abandoned, here he'd stretch out

When weary. 'Come hither,' he'd cry, 'come, changeable Aura,

Come to my bosom, relieve my sultry heat!'

Some stupid tattling busybody remembered this utterance,

700 Told it to Cephalus' wife.

Poor Procris thought 'Aura' was the name of a rival –

She fainted, struck dumb with sudden grief,

Turned pale as late vine-leaves, caught by winter's onset

When the clustering grapes have been picked,

705 Or ripe quinces, bending the bough they hang from, or cornel–

Berries while they're still unfit to eat.

When she came round, she rent her flimsy garments,

Raked nails down her innocent cheeks,

And at once rushed out down the street, hair all dishevelled,

710 Like a thyrsus-crazed Maenad. When

She got near the spot, she left her companions in the valley

And tiptoed bravely into the wood, alone.

What went on in your mind as you lurked there, jealous-crazy,

Procris? What fire consumed your frantic heart?

715 *Any moment she'd come now, this Aura, you thought, whoever*

She might be, and you'd see their shame
With your own eyes. Now you regretted coming (you never
Wanted to catch him at it), now you were glad,
As love spun you every which way. Name, place, informer,
720 *All urged belief; and always, what the mind*
Fears may be true it thinks is true.

When she saw the flattened
Grass where a body had lain, her heart beat fast
In her trembling bosom. By now it was noon, the shadows
shrunken

At the midpoint between dawn and dusk,
725 And—look!—mercurial Cephalus came back through the
woodlands,

Rinsed his hot face at the spring, while Procris lay
Hidden, taut, anxious. He settled down in his usual
Grassbed. 'Soft Zephyrs, gentle Aura, blow
On me!' he called. Poor girl, when she grasped her more-than-
welcome

730 Misunderstanding, the colour flowed back to her face
And the sense to her brain: up she sprang, thrashed through
the foliage,

A wife making a beeline for her beloved's arms.
He—thinking the movement a beast's—with youthful swiftness
Jack-knifed to his feet, spear poised. *You fool,*
735 *What are you at? That's no beast, hold back your weapon! –*
Too late, ah God, you've hit her, the shaft's
Through your girl!

'My love', she whispered, 'you've pierced
this loving
Heart of mine yet again, the last
Of so many wounds from Cephalus! Though I pass untimely,
740 No rival's displaced me: *that* will make the earth

Lie light on my bones. Now the breeze that I mistrusted
Gathers my yielding spirit: I faint, I'm gone –
Close my eyes with your dear hand –'

He clasped her dying
Body to his, rained tears on the cruel wound,
745 And as the last breath ebbed from her (poor rash lady!)
The lips of her sad lover gathered it in.

Enough of digressions! If I'm to steer my weary vessel
Safe into harbour, I needs must tackle the bare
Facts of the case. You're anxiously expecting me to escort you
750 To parties: here too you solicit my advice.
Arrive late, when the lamps are lit; make a graceful entrance –
Delay enhances charm, delay's a great bawd.
Plain you may be, but at night you'll look fine to the tipsy:
Soft lights and shadows will mask your faults.
755 Take your food with dainty fingers: good table-manners
matter:

Don't besmear your whole face with a greasy paw.
Don't eat first at home, and nibble—but equally, don't indulge
your

Appetite to the full, leave something in hand.
If Paris saw Helen stuffing herself to the eyeballs
760 He'd detest her, he'd feel her abduction had been
A stupid mistake. But drinking, for girls, is another matter –
It suits them: desire and wine go well
In tandem. Note, too, that a strong head makes for steady
Feet and a clear mind, no seeing double. The girl
765 Who's passed out drunk is the most disgusting object,
Deserves to be laid by anyone in sight;
And falling asleep when the table's cleared is just as
Risky: pudendal things befall a snoozing girl.

What's left I blush to tell you; but kindly Venus

770 Claims as uniquely hers

All that raises a blush. Each woman should know herself, pick
methods

To suit her body: one fashion won't do for all.

Let the girl with a pretty face lie supine, let the lady

Who boasts a good back be viewed

775 From behind. Milanion bore Atalanta's legs on

His shoulders: nice legs should always be used this way.

The petite should ride horse (Andromache, Hector's Theban

Bride, was too tall for these games: no jockey she);

If you're built like a fashion model, with willowy figure,

780 Then kneel on the bed, your neck

A little arched; the girl who has perfect legs and bosom

Should lie sideways on, and make her lover stand.

Don't blush to unbind your hair like some ecstatic maenad

And tumble long tresses about

785 Your upcurved throat. If childbirth's seamed your belly

With wrinkles, then offer a rear

Engagement, Parthian style. Sex has countless positions –

An easy and undemanding one is to lie

On your right side, half-reclining. Neither Delphi nor Ammon

790 Will tell you more truth than my Muse:

Long experience, if anything, should establish credit: trust my

Art, and let these verses speak for themselves!

A woman should melt with passion to her very marrow,

The act should give equal pleasure to them both:

795 Keep up a flow of seductive whispered endearments,

Use sexy taboo words while you're making love,

And if nature's denied you the gift of achieving a climax,

Moan as though you were coming, put on an act!

(The girl who can't feel down there is really unlucky,

800 Missing out on what both sexes should enjoy.)
Only take care that you make your performance convincing,
 Thrash about in a frenzy, roll your eyes,
Let your cries and gasping breath suggest what pleasure
 You're getting (that part has its own private signs).
805 After the pleasures of sex, though, *don't* try to dun your lover
 For a present: such habits defeat
Their own ends. And don't open all the bedroom windows:
 Much of your body is better left unseen.
Our sport is ended: high time to quit this creative venture,
810 Turn loose the swans that drew my poet's car.
As once the young men, so now let my girl-disciples
 Inscribe their trophies: *Ovid was my guide.*

CURES FOR LOVE

‘Wars,’ said Love, after reading this booklet’s name and title,
‘I see wars are being planned against me.’ ‘Please don’t
charge

Your favourite poet with such a crime, Cupid,’ I answered,
‘Think of the times I’ve borne, under your command,

5 The colours you gave me! No Diomedes I, to wound your
Mother, so that she fled to the rarified heights
Of heaven in Mars’s chariot: some young men may grow tepid,
But I’ve always been a lover, and if you should ask
What I’m up to now—I’m in love. Besides, I’ve published a

system

10 For winning you over: what was pure instinct once
Is now done by rule. Dear boy, I’m betraying neither
You nor my art; this new Muse will not reweave
Or unravel past work. Good luck to the happy lover, let him
Rejoice in his passion, sail on with a following wind –

15 But for those who suffer the whims of an unworthy mistress
Help is at hand: learn the comfort which my art
Has to bestow! Why does one poor lover fasten

A noose round his neck, and swing—depressing load –
From the roofbeam, or another run a sword through his
gizzard?

20 *You*, Love, you peace-lover, *you* get blamed
For their slaughter. Let the man who’ll the (unless he lays off)
Of helpless passion, lay off—then you’ll have no deaths
On your conscience. Besides, you’re a child, should play
games only:

So, play: a mild regime goes well with your years.

25 You might have employed the naked arrows of warfare,
But *your* shafts are untainted by deadman’s blood.

Let your stepfather wield the sword and sharp spear, striding

Victorious through the carnage, red with gore:

Stick to your mother's arts, for them we practise safely –

30 No mother's bereavement is ever their fault;

Cause doors to be battered down by midnight brawlers,

And many a garland to be hung

On their lintels; bring young men and shy girls together,

Teach them the tricks to outwit

35 Suspicious husbands; show a shut-out swain on the doorstep

How to curse and flatter by turns,

How to sing doleful ditties—such tears should well content you,

Why risk the reproach of death? Yours isn't the torch

To light hungry funeral pyres.' Then Love, all golden, moving

40 His jewelled wings, said: 'Finish your purposed task.'

Attend to my precepts, then, you disappointed gallants,

All those whom their loves have utterly betrayed.

Let him who taught you to love now teach you love's cure –

Take succour from the hand that struck the wound!

45 Herbs healing and noxious grow in the same hedgerow,

And often the rose will bloom

Close by the nettle; Achilles' spear, that wounded

Telephus, also healed the wound it made.

(Whatever I tell the men, please believe me, ladies, is meant

for

50 You too: I'm giving arms to both sides,

And even though some point may not directly concern you,

Yet much can be learnt by example.) To quench

The fierce flames of desire is a profitable objective –

Don't let your heart be enslaved

55 To its particular vice. Had Phyllis obeyed my precepts,

She'd have lived to retread the path she took

That ninth and fatal time; had poor doomed Dido, never

Would she have stood on that high tower and watched
 The Trojan fleet spread sail; had Medea, jealous outrage
 60 Would have drawn the line at killing her sons to spite
 Their father Jason. Had Tereus, so besotted with Philomela,
 Used my techniques, *he* could have avoided rape –
 And life as a hoopoe. Give me Pasiphaë, she'll abandon
 Her taurine fixation; give me Phaedra, her taboo
 65 Desires will evaporate. Entrust Paris to me, and Helen's
 Safe with her husband, the Greeks will never bring
 Troy's citadel down. Had Scylla perused my pamphlets, Nisus
 Wouldn't have lost that purple lock.
 With me for leader, men, control your ruinous urges;
 70 With me for leader, let ship and crew run straight!
 When you were learning the love-game, you had to study
 Ovid:
 You still need to read him now.
 I am your public deliverer, will lighten hearts hard mastered
 By passion: so welcome, each one of you, the rod
 75 That proclaims your freedom! My opening prayer, Apollo,
 Inventor of music and all healing arts,
 Is to you: may your laurel protect me, help poet and healer
 Alike, since the labours of both are your concern.
 If you change your mind, then stop at the very first threshold
 80 While you still may, while the impulse stirring your heart
 Is moderate still. Crush out the bad seed of this sudden
 Disease before it can grow, let your horse hold back
 At the outset. Waiting breeds strength, time ripens tender
 Grapes, turns the green herbage of bristling corn.
 85 The tree that now spreads its welcome shade for travellers
 Began life planted as a fragile slip
 In the topsoil: one hand would have been enough to uproot it

Now it towers immense, made great by its own
strength.

With sharp and circumspect mind search out the nature
90 Of that which you love: if the yoke
Might one day gall, throw it off! Resist at the beginning:
When the disease has fed fat on long delay
Medicine comes too late. So make haste, don't wait for
tomorrow –

If you're unready today, by then you'll be
95 Even less prepared. Love's a con, feeds on delaying tactics:
Tomorrow is always the best day
For making your break to freedom. Few rivers start from
mighty

Sources, most broaden as they flow, fed full
By tributary streams. Had Myrrha realized sooner
100 How heinous the crime she was planning, she'd not be
A myrrh-tree today, bark hiding her blushes. I've seen a
wound that

Could have been healed on the spot, but went bad
When neglected too long. Yet because we love to reap the
harvest

Of Venus, we always say: Tomorrow will do
105 Just as well'—and meanwhile the silent flames are creeping
Into our guts, while the evil tree's roots thrust
Down deeper still. Thus if the first-aid season's
Been missed, if love's set firm in a captive heart,
A tougher problem remains. But because I'm summoned
110 Late to the patient's bedside, that doesn't mean
I must abandon the case. Philoctetes should have severed,
With a firm hand, the gangrene from his flesh –
And yet, the tale goes, he was healed years later, living
To strike the final blow that brought Troy down.
115 There: a moment ago I was hastening to expel your

Ills at first blush, but now the help I bring
Comes late in the day. When you're trying to extinguish
A fire, either catch it quick or let it burn out.
While its fury's on course, then cede to that coursing fury:

120 All such impetuous power is hard to face.
Any swimmer's a fool who thrashes against the current
When he could have gone slantwise, downstream.
The impatient and still intractable temper rejects my
Art with contempt, abominates every word

125 A counsellor gives. Best wait till the victim will let me
examine

His wounds, till he's ready to hear the truth.
Who but a fool would try to stop a mother weeping
At her son's graveside? That's no place for advice.
When her tears are all shed, when her heartache's had
appeasement,

130 *Then* use your words to ease the knot of pain.
Good timing's an art, a medicine almost: wine given
At the right time's a boon, at the wrong
Can do positive harm. If you pick an unsuitable moment
Your veto will irritate, inflame the disease.

135 So the moment you feel yourself treatable by my system,
Act as I tell you. *No leisure*—that's rule
Number one. Leisure stimulates love, leisure watches the
lovelorn,

Leisure's the cause and sustenance of this sweet
Evil. Eliminate leisure, and Cupid's bow is broken,

140 His torches lie lightless, scorned.
As a plane-tree rejoices in wine, as a poplar in water,
As a marsh-reed in swampy ground, so Venus loves
Leisure: if you want an end to your loving, keep busy –
Love gives way to business—and you'll be safe.

145 Listlessness, too much sleep (no morning appointments),
nights at

The gambling-tables, or on the bottle—these
Inflict no wounds, yet ruin your moral fibre, open

A way for insidious Love to breach your hearts.
Cupid homes in on sloth, detests the active—so give that

150 Bored mind of yours some really absorbing work:
Public business, the law-courts, a friend in need of Counsel –
Join the smart urban-legal civilian set!

Or else be a soldier (the young man's proper profession),
And watch your erotic frolics quit the field!

155 The fugitive Parthian, fresh cause of glorious triumph,
Sees Caesar's troops come crunching across his steppes;
So conquer Love's *and* me Parthians' arrows together,
Score a double, bring home to your country's gods
Not one but two trophies. When pricked by Diomedes' weapon

160 Venus quit fighting, left her lover Mars
To bear the brunt of the battle. Why do you think Aegisthus
Became an adulterer? Easy: he was idle—and bored.
Everyone else was away at Troy on a lengthy
Campaign: all Greece had shipped

165 Its contingents across. Suppose he hankered for warfare? Argos
Had no wars to offer. Suppose he fancied the courts?
Argos lacked litigation. Love was better than doing nothing.
That's how Cupid slips in; that's how he stays.

What else diverts the mind? Country matters, good farming –

170 These can oust all other concerns.
Tame and yoke oxen, set them to ploughing, make them
Force the share through your hard soil;
Bury your seed-corn in the upturned furrow, coax your
Land into yielding a bumper crop.

175 Look, there are branches so heavy with clustering apples

The tree can scarcely support the weight of its own
 Fruit; look beyond, at the chuckling water-channels,
 At the sheep as they crop lush grass;
 There go the goats up the fells and rocky outcrops,
 180 Soon they'll be back with full
 Udders to suckle their kids. The shepherd plays his pan-pipes,
 Well-trained dogs at heel. From the depths
 Of a nearby wood there comes the sound of anxious lowing
 As a cow calls her missing calf.
 185 Don't forget the business of smoking out your bees and
 Raiding their hives for the combs –
 Autumn brings fruit, while summer's rich with harvests
 And spring offers flowers; a fire
 Takes the edge off winter. Your countryman picks the ripened
 190 Grapes in due season, has a time to tread
 The vintage, a time for reaping and binding, a time to
 Harrow the stubbled soil. You yourself
 Can plant out shoots in your well-irrigated garden,
 You yourself can channel the water's flow.
 195 In the grafting season make one branch cleave to another,
 Let the tree stand covered with foliage not its own.
 When once the mind begins to delight in such pleasures
 Love's done for, flutters away
 On enfeebled wings. What else? You could take up hunting:
 Venus
 200 Has often been shamefully forced to quit the field
 By Diana. Now set your beagles to chase the streaking
 Jack-hare, now spread your nets
 On high leafy cols; scare the shy deer from its covert,
 Meet the boar's charge, bring it down
 205 With a shrewd spear-thrust. You'll go to bed exhausted,
 Enjoy sound sleep, no girl

To keep you awake. Less taxing, but still a proper occupation
 Is catching small birds with net and snare,
 Or camouflaging a fish-hook under exiguous
 210 Bait for some greedy fish to devour.
 With these or other devices, till you unlearn your passion,
 You must con yourself on the sly.
 Though the chains that hold you are strong, you just need to
 make a lengthy
 Journey, go far away: you'll weep, your mind
 215 Will dwell on the name of your deserted mistress,
 Your foot often hesitate midway
 Through your travels. The less you're anxious to go, the more
 you
 Should make sure of going, persist,
 Force yourself to hurry regardless. Don't pray for rain, don't
 let those
 220 Foreign sabbaths delay you, or days
 Of ill-omen. Don't ask how many miles you've covered,
 Or how many still remain; don't fake delays
 To keep you around; don't count time, don't keep looking over
 Your shoulder to Rome. Get out, take Parthian flight –
 225 That's worked so far. Some may call my precepts cruel: cruel
 I confess they are; yet to recover health
 Demands much suffering. When sick, I often swallowed
 Bitter medicines (with an effort), denied myself food.
 To cure the body you'll put up with cauterization, suffer
 230 The knife, let no water pass your parching lips.
 What won't you do, then, to keep a well-balanced psyche
 (Though this part of you costs more
 Than the body)? Still, my technique is toughest at the outset –
 Your only task: to survive those first few days.
 235 Have you seen how their first yoke galls fresh-broken oxen,

And the racehorse is chafed by a new girth?
Going abroad is a step you may well find irksome,
But go you will—and then you'll long to return,
Drawn not by home and country, but by love for your
mistress,

240 And camouflaging your weakness with fine words.

Still, once you've set forth, there'll be innumerable
distractions:

The countryside, travelling-companions, that long, long
road.

Just a short trip, you reckon? *No good*. Prolong your exile

Till flame fades to embers, embers to dead ash.

245 If you hasten home without the proper resolution

Love will renew the battle, war hard

Against you. Despite your absence you'll come back thirsty,
greedy,

Your whole venture abroad a dead loss.

If anyone fancies that Thessaly's noxious herbals

250 Or magic arts can help him, that's his affair.

Witchcraft's ways are outdated: Apollo, my patron, offers

Innocuous aid through the spell

Of holy song. Under my guidance no spirits will be summoned

Up from their graves, no crone will split the earth

255 Asunder with horrid cantrips, ripe crops won't jump the
hedges

Into some neighbour's field, the sun's bright orb

Won't fade without warning. All will be just as usual –

The Tiber flowing seaward, the moon aloft

Bright-riding in heaven. No heart will exorcise its passion

260 By incantations, it takes more than sulphur to drive

Love out. What use were the herbs of Colchis to Medea

When she wanted to remain in her native home?

Of what avail to Circe her mother's enchantments

When a favouring wind bore Ulysses' ships away?

265 She tried every trick to stop her crafty guest from leaving –

Yet he hoisted sail and took off. She tried

Every trick to avoid being inflamed by savage passion,

But Love long dwelt in her unwilling breast.

She could subject men to a thousand metamorphoses:

270 The laws of her own heart she could never change.

When Ulysses stood, impatient, on the brink of departure

She still attempted (it's said) to hold him back

With these words: 'I'm not begging you, now, to be my
husband –

Though this, I recall, was at first

275 My fondest hope; though I would have made you a worthy
consort,

Being a goddess, child of the mighty Sun.

All I want is more time: please, don't be over-hasty –

What less could I ask of you?

You can see how rough the sea is, you ought to fear it:

280 Later the wind will sit better for your sails.

Why fly now? There's no new Troy here in the building,

No captain to call his old comrades back to arms.

Here's love, here's peace, in which I alone am wounded,

And this land will enjoy safety beneath your sway.'

285 But while she yet spoke, Ulysses cast off, left harbour,

And the wind that filled his sails also blew away

Her useless arguments. Poor Circe, burning, resorted

To her usual tricks—and still couldn't douse *that* fire.

So if you look to my arts for help in trouble, never

290 Rely on magic, never trust a spell.

If some compelling motive should keep you in the City,

Here's my special in-the-City advice:

Self-preservation is best achieved by whoever can shatter

The bonds that cripple his spirit, cast out the pain
 295 From his psyche once and for ever. A man of such rare courage
 Compels my admiration, but needs no hints
 I can give him. No, it's you, who find unlearning passion
 For what you love so painful, who long to do it but
 can't,
 That should follow my precepts. Keep thinking about the
 disfavours
 300 Your mistress has done you, the losses you've sustained:
 'She has this, she has that, and—not content with her plunder –
 The greedy bitch has bankrupted me as well!
 She's promised me love, then cheated on her promise –
 The times she's left me keeping vigil all night
 305 Outside her door! Other men turn her on, for me she's frigid –
 Any travelling salesman can have her, yet I can't.'
 Let such thoughts be gall to embitter all your feelings,
 Nurse them, build thence the seedbed of your hate!
 Eloquence of expression would also be an advantage –
 310 Just *suffer*, though, and you'll find
 Fluency comes by itself. Not long ago *my* fancy
 Lit on a girl who didn't suit my tastes:
 The doctor was sick—most embarrassing, I admit it –
 But my own prescriptions worked a cure.
 315 It helped me to keep dwelling on the flaws in my mistress;
 When I did this, it often brought relief.
 'Look at her legs,' I'd say, 'they're just plain awful –'
 (To tell the truth, they were fine);
 'And her arms, now, you know, *they're* not exactly pretty –'
 320 (To tell the truth, they were);
 'How short she is'—she wasn't—'how much she demands of her
 lover –'
 (Ah, *that* was what put the sharpest edge

On my hatred.) Evil and good are near neighbours; often

We criticize the virtue, accept the vice.

325 Whenever you can, run down your girl's attractions, fudge
your

True opinion by a hair's breadth:

If she's plump, then call her 'bloated', 'black' if she's swarthy;

A svelte girl labelled 'beanpole' doesn't sound good.

She's anything but naïve? Then say she's 'saucy' –

330 Or if she's virtuous, 'naïve' is the word.

What else? Any talent you know your mistress is short on

Keep cajoling her to display:

If she hasn't a voice, then insist on the poor girl singing,

If she's all arms and legs, make her dance;

335 Her accent's appalling? Engage her in endless conversation;

She can't strum a chord? Then ask

For a solo lyre recital. She walks awkwardly? Promenade her.

Her breasts are great udders? Don't let her wear a bra.

If her teeth stick out, get her laughing with funny stories;

340 If she's weak-eyed, use pathos, make her cry.

You might also try out a brisk early morning visit,

Unannounced, before she's put on her public face.

We're dazzled by feminine adornment, by the surface,

All gold and jewels: so little of what we observe

345 Is the girl herself. And where (you may ask) amid such plenty

Can our object of passion be found? The eye's deceived

By Love's smart camouflage. So arrive without warning, catch
her

Defenceless (while *you're* quite safe): her own defects

Will undo her, poor dear. (All the same, too much reliance

350 On this rule is a risk: men have often been deceived

By artless beauty.) So when she's smearing all that concocted

Muck on her face is another good time—don't be shy –

To call and inspect her. You'll find pots of make-up in a
thousand

Colours, and lanoline grease that's melted and run
355 Down into her sweaty cleavage: I've often been nauseated
By the putrefying stink of the stuff, a Harpies' feast.
At this point—since Love needs removal from every quarter –
Some hints on how to conduct yourself during The Act.
There's much on this score that I'd blush to set down: just
figure

360 It out for yourself, read between the lines, augment
What I tell you. Some critics, you see, have been attacking
My poems: in *their* opinion my Muse
Is a scandalous wanton. Yet, so long as I keep my public
And remain a household name, let the few impugn
365 My work as they please! The envious scholar belittles
Homer's achievement—but only Homer ensures
That the scholar's name is remembered. Even Virgil's *Aeneid*
Has been savaged by impious tongues –
Envy attacks the highest, as winds scour mountain summits,
370 And God's flung bolts strike peaks.
So you (whoever you are) who take offence at my licence,
Learn at least to match metre and theme –
Homer's hexameter goes well with doughty warfare,
But for erotic trifles it's out of place;
375 Tragic actors declaim: high wrath befits the tragic buskin;
For commonplaces we put on the comic clog;
When invective's needed, unsheath your sharp iambs
(Either cursive or last-foot-lame).
Let seductive Elegy celebrate Love and his quiver,
380 Play the frivolous mistress, follow her bent.
To recount the great deeds of Achilles, Callimachean
Elegiacs won't do; epic verse is out of place

For romance. Who'd accept a soubrette as a tragic leading lady?

Andromache played *à la* Thais puts one's teeth
385 On edge. But Thais belongs to my Art, my pleasure's
Free-roving, not for nice wives: oh yes,
Thais belongs to my Art. If my Muse can match her sportive
Theme, then I've won, and the charge
Against her is false. So burst, gnawing Envy! I'm famous
390 Already, and if I keep on like this, my fame
Will grow greater yet. You're too quick—if I live, you'll be
sorry:

I've plenty more poems in my head.
My taste for fame's a delight that grows with adulation;
My horses still pant and strain
395 On the hill's lowest slopes. What the epic owes to Virgil,
Elegy likewise owes—and admits it—to me.
So much for rebuttal of Envy. Now rein in more closely,
Stick to your own poetic track!

*

When you're eager for intercourse, all a young stud's labours,
400 And the promised night is close, then to make
Quite sure your mistress's charms don't overwhelm you
If you come to her lusty-fresh, my advice
Is to get in some other girl first, slake your prime voluptuous
Urges on her: when it's time for round number two
405 You'll be slow off the mark. Delay most sharpens pleasure:
winter

Makes us yearn for the sun, in summer we covet shade,
And a drink when we're thirsty. One tip I'm embarrassed to
tell you,
But will all the same—choose a position you think
The least effective or suitable. (That's not difficult: women
seldom

410 Admit the truth to themselves, there's nothing they don't
Find becoming.) What else? Keep the shutters fully open,
Let daylight reveal her flaws.
When your passion's spent, when you're past the post and
lying
415 Flat out, exhausted, mind a blank,
Revulsion making you wish you'd never had a woman
And swear you won't touch one again for years,
Then mark and remember every fault in her body,
Turn a bright light on her defects.
420 Some may call such things trifling, and so they are: but though
singly
They amount to nothing, their cumulative aid
Is not to be sneezed at. The bite of a minuscule viper
Kills the massive ox, and it's often some lightweight dog
That holds the wild boar at bay. So gather all my precepts –
425 Safety in numbers: little safeguards soon add up.
Still, since there exist as many fashions as postures,
There's no way (as I see it) I can describe them all.
What could not give the least offence to your own feelings
In another man's judgement might well
Be a cause for reproach. One lover was stopped in mid-
performance
430 By a glimpse of the girl's slit as she spread
Her legs, another by pudendal stains on the bedsheets
When she got up after the act.
If such incidents can affect you, you're the merest trifler,
And the flame that lit your heart was weak indeed.
435 But once let Love draw his strongbow to some purpose
And wound you—you'll soon be in search
Of effective first-aid. What about the man whose passion
Was secretly watching a girl perform that act

Of discharge which custom makes private? God forbid I
should offer

440 Such counsel: though it might help, it's not
Admissible. My advice, then, is to keep *two* mistresses –
 Few men have the stamina for more.
When the mind's divided, and strays in opposite directions,
 Each desire saps the other's strength.

445 Much channelling reduces the mightiest rivers;
 Rake out the fire, and even the fiercest flame
Dies down. Your well-caulked ship needs a double anchor,
 One hook will not suffice for those liquid depths.
The man who's long been equipped with twin consolations

450 Long since emerged as victor in the high
Citadel: but you–pledged, like a fool, to one mistress –
 Must now go find a new love.

 Minos worked off his hots for Pasiphaë on Procris,
 The second wife of Phineus routed the first,
455 And by making room in bed for Callirrhoë, Alcmaeon
 Drove darling Alpheisiboea from his heart.

 Oenone would have kept Prince Paris for ever, had his
mistress

 Helen not cut her out. The Odrysian king
Tereus enjoyed his wife's beauty–but her imprisoned
460 Sister was an even prettier girl.
Why waste time over all these boring examples? Every
 Old love's eclipsed by a new. The loss
Of one son among many makes less grief for a mother
 Than when she must wail: 'You, you were my only one!'

465 And lest you should think I'm making new rules for you to
follow

 (Would that the cachet of the idea *were* mine!)

Even Agamemnon saw this–and what should he *not* see,

With all Greece subject to his rule?

War brought the victor a captive, Chryseis: he loved her –

470 Yet her idiot of a father wandered round

Shedding big tears. Why cry, you old horror? They're happy;

This inept concern of yours does nothing but harm.

When Calchas—safe in Achilles' protection—gave orders

For the girl to be returned, and she was brought

475 To her father's house, Agamemnon said: 'There's this other

Whose beauty near-matches hers, whose name is the
same

Bar one syllable: her, if he's wise, will Achilles freely yield me

—

If not, let him feel my power! And if any of you

Feels tempted to criticize my decision, fellow-Achaeans,

480 My strong hand grasps the sceptre: that has to count

For something. If I am king, yet sleep with no captive

Concubine, let Thersites usurp my throne!'

Such were his words. He took her. She proved an ample solace

For his previous girl. One passion was slaked, replaced

485 By another. So take the hint from Agamemnon's example,

Acquire new flames, let your love be split two ways

Where two roads meet. How to find them, you ask? Read my
handbook,

And your boat will soon be scuppers-deep in girls!

If my precepts have any value, if Apollo delivers

490 Useful advice to mortals through the words

I utter, now hear this: though your heart be hot as lava,

Make your mistress believe you all too cold;

Feign indifference; if you're sad, don't let her notice;

When you feel like crying, laugh.

495 (I'm not saying you have to jettison your passion

In mid-course: my regimen is not *that* harsh.)

Simulate what you are not, pretend the fit's abated –

Faking it will lead to the genuine thing.

To avoid social drinking, I've often acted drowsy.

500 Then found myself really nodding off;

I've laughed at the dupe who made a pretence of loving,

Only to fall, like a fowler, into his own snare.

Love enters the mind through habit, is by habit evicted;

The man who can counterfeit sanity will prove sane.

505 She's told you to come, so come on the night appointed:

You arrive, but the house is locked. Just grin

And bear it. Spare the poor door your insults (or
endearments),

Don't lie on that stony sill all night;

The following day, don't indulge in sour recriminations,

510 And keep all telltale signs

Of distress off your face. When she sees your interest waning

She'll soon swallow her pride. (One more

Pay-off from my advice.) Yet deceive yourself too, don't set up

Any deadline for tapering off your affair. A horse

515 Will often strain at the bit. Conceal your advantage;

What you don't proclaim will happen. The bird avoids

A too-obvious net. Don't encourage her self-conceit, don't let
her

Despise you. Play tough: use toughness to make her
yield.

Her door's ajar? Walk past; when she calls you back, ignore
her.

520 You've a date? Don't show up on the night.

Breaking dates is no great hardship if a lack of endurance

Can secure instant relief through some easy lay.

Now could anyone call my precepts too tough? Why, I even

At times play the peacemaker's role:

525 Human variety calls for variety of prescription,

Disease takes a thousand forms, so must the cure.
Some bodies can scarcely be healed by the keen scalpel,
Yet many derive relief from drugs and herbs.
Suppose you're too soft, can't break loose, are held in bondage
530 With cruel Love's foot set hard
On your neck: give up the struggle, let the winds rule your
sailing,
Follow the run of the waves, let your oar drift.
You have to slake your thirst, you're parched and desperate:
I admit the need. Drink, then, from midstream –
535 But drink even more than your heart and passion crave for,
Till your gullet's full, till the water runs down your
chin.
Go in there, enjoy your girl with no prohibitions, let her
Consume your nights and days alike.
Aim for a glut of passion: gluttoned hearts break off liaisons;
540 When you feel you can do without it, still hold on
Till you're fed to the back teeth, till love chokes on
abundance,
Till you're sick of the very sight of her house.
That love, too, is tenacious which diffidence nurtures:
If you want to be rid of it, rid yourself of fear.
545 Any man who's scared of rivals poaching his women
Will hardly be cured by doctors, even the best.
Which son will any mother love most among her offspring?
The soldier, who may never (she fears)
Return from the wars. Near the Colline Gate stands an ancient
550 Temple of Venus: there dwells Lethaeon Love,
Who heals hearts with the gift of forgetfulness, douses his
torches
In that cool, annealing stream.
Thither come youths who hope to blank out their promises,
And girls impaled on the charms

555 Of hard-hearted lovers. This is what Cupid told me
 (Was he really there, or a dream? A dream, I think):
 ‘You who induce—and who cure—love’s troublesome passions,
 Ovid, add *this* to your precepts. God has assigned
 A greater or lesser share of misfortune to each person:
 560 Let him meditate on his woes, he’ll be shot of love.
 Let the man who’s worried by monthly mortgage repayments
 Concentrate in agony on the lump sum
 He’s borrowed. Suppose your one complaint is a cruel father:
 Then keep that cruel father well in mind.
 565 Here’s a husband scraping by on his wife’s mean dowry—let
 him
 Blame her for blighting his career.
 You possess a rich estate, a fruitful vineyard? Worry
 In case the sun scorches your unripe grapes.
 A merchant awaiting his ship’s return should daily
 570 Brood on the cruel sea, our wreck-littered coasts.
 X has a drafted son, Y a marriageable daughter –
 Agony! Yet indeed who *isn’t* strapped
 With a thousand reasons for worry? To whip up hatred against
 his
 Mistress Helen, Paris ought to have dwelt
 575 On his brothers’ deaths –’ Still speaking, the boyish
 simulacrum
 Faded out of my dream (if dream it was).
 What’s to do now? My pilot’s gone overboard in mid-passage,
 And I’m driven perforce to explore uncharted seas.
 Lonely places, you lovers, are dangerous: shun lonely places,
 580 Don’t opt out—you’ll be safer in a crowd!
 You’ve no need for secrecy (secrecy fosters passion):
 From now on company’s what you need.
 If you’re solitary you’ll be sad, your forsaken mistress

Always there in your mind's eye,

585 A too-vivid presence. That's why night's grimmer than
daytime:

The friends who might relieve your mood aren't there.

Don't avoid conversation, don't shut the door on callers,

Don't hide yourself away and cry in the dark.

Always have some Pylades there to back up Orestes:

590 Of friendship's various benefits, this

Is by no means the slightest. What was it destroyed poor
Phyllis

But the secret forest? The cause of her death is clear:

Being alone. Like some Thracian Maenad, all dishevelled

By the god's triennial rites, hair flying wild,

595 She ran; now paused, where she could, to gaze out seaward,

Now fell exhausted amid the dunes,

Cried: 'Faithless Demophoön!' to the unhearing breakers

Till sobs strangled her words.

There was a narrow path, a shady tunnel

600 Which she often walked to the sea:

Nine times the poor girl paced it, upbraiding her lover,
deathly

Pale, glancing down at her girdle, then up

At the branches: undecided, she shrank from action, fearful

Fingers trembling towards her throat.

605 Had you not been alone then, Phyllis (and how I wish it!), the
mourning

Forest would never have shed its leaves

For your loss. So let Phyllis' fate warn you, avoid excessive

Seclusion, all mistress-vexed lovers, all man-vexed girls!

There once was a youth who did all that my Muse commanded

610 And was almost safe in harbour. But then

He relapsed: he'd fallen among some passionate lovers,

So that Love resumed the weapons he'd laid aside.

If you love, but against your will, then shun contagion:

Even cattle are often plagued this way. To observe

615 The lovesick infects the eyes that watch them; through contact

Our bodies are victimized by countless ills.

Water will sometimes seep from a nearby river

Into hard-parched soil: thus love

Will seep in unseen unless you detach yourself from your
lover:

620 This is a game at which we all excel.

Another young man, though cured, had a neighbourhood
problem –

Running into his mistress got him down,

He just couldn't take it. The half-healed scar reopened,

His old wound was back, my arts

625 Sustained defeat. When the house next door is blazing,

How fight off the flames? Best to be somewhere else.

Don't stroll down the colonnade which is *her* favourite,

Avoid the kind of company she keeps.

What's the use of nostalgia? Who wants cold love reheated?

630 Live—if you can—in another world. (It's hard,

When you're ravenous, to hold back from a laden table;

Bubbling water puts an edge on your thirst.

Hard, too, to restrain the bull that's glimpsed the heifer;

A stallion always whinnies at sight of a mare.)

635 Even then, if you're going to reach shore at length, deserting

The girl herself isn't enough:

Bid farewell to her sister and mother, to that conniving

Old nurse, to whoever plays the slightest part

In your mistress's life. Don't accept fake-tearful greetings

640 Brought round by maid or houseboy in her name,

And—though you may ache to know—never ask what she's
doing:

Be patient, it'll pay you to hold your tongue.

You too, who keep endlessly bitching about the mistress

You've left, who insist on telling just why

645 Your affair broke off—please, quit complaining: the best
revenge is

Silence. Just let her dribble away

From your desires. Keep quiet, don't tell us it's all over:

The man who protests to the world

'I'm not in love', is. Don't attempt to extinguish your ardour

650 At a stroke, but by slow degrees: phase it out

And you'll be quite safe. Flash floods run deeper than a
perennial

River, but soon are gone: the river flows

All year through. Let love wane in slow evanescence,

Fade on the breeze and die.

655 Yet to hate the girl you once loved is a crime, an end befitting

None but a savage: indifference will suffice,

And the man whose love breeds hatred either loves still

Or will find his misery hard to exorcise.

Man and woman so lately one, then enemies—that's ugly,

660 Even Venus of the Law-Courts can never condone such
strife.

Yet men often prosecute a mistress, and still adore her

Regardless: where there's no strife, love slips

Away without any urging. Take the case of my young client,

His wife in a litter, waiting, his every word

665 Abristle with threats against her. Brandishing a summons,

'Come on out!' he told her. She did. At the sight,

Dumbstruck, he dropped both arms, let fall his petition,

Went into a clinch, said: 'You win.'

A friendly separation is safer—and more becoming: don't hurry

670 Into court from your bedroom, let her keep

The presents you gave her without any litigation –

Your gain will far outweigh

Any loss you incur. And if, later, some chance should bring
you

Together, then keep memory fresh, deploy

675 All the weapons I've given you. Fight on, courageous soldier,

Now comes your call to arms, now you must slay

Penthesilea herself! Now remember that hard threshold,

Fond lover-boy, and your rival, and those vain

Oaths that the gods witnessed: don't tidy your hair to meet
her,

680 Don't drape your gown in a loose

Conspicuous style, do *nothing* to impress this discarded
mistress,

Just treat her as one of the crowd.

Though each of us can learn from his own example, let me

Suggest what it is that most frustrates

685 All our efforts. We hope to be loved, so postpone the final
break-off

Too long: while our self-conceit still holds

We're a credulous lot. Don't believe all they tell you (what's
more deceptive

Than women's words?), don't credit the vows they
swear

To the eternal gods, don't let yourself be softened

690 By a girl in tears—they school their eyes to weep

On request. They've countless tricks to assault a lover's
feelings,

He's a rock pounded by waves from every side.

Don't explain your reasons for wanting a separation:

Nurse your grievance, don't spell it out.

695 Don't mention her faults, she only might correct them –

Why promote her cause at your expense?

Strength lies in silence: the man who heaps reproaches

On a girl is asking her to prove him wrong.

No Ulysses I, to steal young Cupid's arrows

700 Or douse his torch in the stream,

Or clip his glimmering wings, or craftily slacken

The string of his sacred bow.

All my songs offer wise advice, so obey the singer –

And do you, healing Apollo, come to my aid,

705 Favour this undertaking! The God is come—hear his quiver

Rattle, the thrum of his lyre: the God is come,

His signs reveal him. Compare the wool that's dyed in

Amyclae

With Tyrian purple—it's inferior stuff;

In the same way, compare *your* girls with famous beauties,

710 And who won't begin to find his mistress a bore?

Either one of those goddesses might have attracted Paris

Till set against Venus: she eclipsed them both.

And don't compare looks alone, match character and talent –

Just make sure love doesn't warp

715 Your judgement. My next point's a small one, but
notwithstanding

Helped many, myself amongst them. Beware

Of re-reading those treasured letters from your seductive

Ex-mistress: such letters, re-read,

Break down the firmest resolve. Grit your teeth and burn the
packet,

720 Whispering, 'May this prove the pyre of my love!'

Althea consumed the firebrand that spelt life for her absent

Son: why shrink from committing lies to the flames?

Remove her wax images too, if you can: why let a mute
portrait

Torment you? That was the cause

725 Of Laodameia's death. Places, too, can be dangerous:

Shun scenes of former love, they stir up grief,
Telling you, *Here she lay, that's the bedroom we slept in,*
Here's where she gave me a good time
All night. Nostalgia will rub love raw, the old wound's opened

730 Afresh: the most trifling error can cripple the weak.
Just as near-extinct embers, when touched with sulphur,
Spark back into life, blaze up,
So, unless you avoid what's bound to renew your passion,
Its lately quiescent flame

735 Will burst out anew. Oh, would that those Greek ships had
avoided

The headland, the false lights, an old man's revenge!
The canny sailor rejoices when Scylla and Charybdis
Are behind him; what *you* must shun are scenes
Of bygone pleasure. Let these be your perilous cape, your
quicksands,

740 Your maelstrom waters, your destructive reefs.
Some things there are that cannot be consciously ordered,
Yet happening by chance will often help.
Strip Phaedra's riches away, and her stepson's safe from
Neptune, no grand-daddy's bull from the sea to scare
745 His horses; Pasiphaë would have loved more wisely minus
Her property. Wealth fosters wanton love.
Why would no man take Hecale, no woman Irus? Simple:
He was a beggar, she was poor.

Poverty lacks the wherewithal to nourish passion –

750 Though that doesn't make it worth while
To want to be poor yourself. What *is* worth while's abstention
From theatres, until you're heartwhole. Flutes,
Zithers and lyres, the singer's voice, the ballerina's
Gestures in dance: all these can shake your nerve.

755 Fictitious love's the main theme of the *corps de ballet*,

The actor's art exhibits, in all its allure,
The temptation you must resist. What's more, though I hate to
say this,

Love-poems are *out*: the ban extends to my own
Collected works. Don't read Callimachus, he's no stranger
760 To passion; Philetas too can do you harm.
Sappho, I know, once helped me to soften up my mistress,
And whatever Anacreon offers, it's certainly not
A strict code of morals. But then, who could leaf through
Tibullus

Unscathed, or Propertius, whose single theme was his
love

For Cynthia? Who can read Gallus, and end in mere
765 indifference?

My poems, too, catch something of this mood.
But unless our patron Apollo's deluded his poets,
Competition is always the greatest cause
Of our troubles. Yet do not let yourself picture a rival,
770 Believe that she sleeps alone!
Hermione was all the more urgently coveted by Orestes
Because she had taken up with another man.
Why this grief, Menelaus? You went to Crete sans Helen,
And took your time there, away from your bride;
775 But when Paris abducted her, *then* you couldn't live wifeless
One moment longer; it was another's love
Ignited your own.. Achilles wept at Briseis' abduction
To pleasure great Agamemnon: believe you me,
He wept with good reason—the son of Atreus did what
780 None but an impotent sluggard could fail to do.
Certainly *I* would have done it, and I'm no wiser than he was:
There we touch on their quarrel's core.
He swore that Briseis was still a virgin—by his truncheon:
But a truncheon (he figured) is no god.

785 May the gods grant you strength to walk past your abandoned
 Mistress's threshold, may your feet hold firm
 To their purpose! You'll make it, hang on, now's the time for a
 headlong
 Gallop, spurring your horse
 Down the final straight. In that grotto imagine Lotus-Eaters
 790 And Sirens: cram on sail, ply oar!
 The man whose rivalry once caused you torment I'd have you
 No longer regard as your foe:
 At the least, though your hatred linger, try a greeting –
 When you can manage to kiss him, you're cured!
 795 Then there's diet: let me round off the physician's duties, tell
 you
 What food you should eat, what avoid.
 All onions–Italian, or Greek and African imported –
 Are harmful: so too
 Is colewort, it sharpens desire, avoid it, and whatever
 800 Else may impel you sexwards. Instead
 Try rue, it sharpens the eyesight–and whatever
 Else may negative the sexual urge.
 What's my advice about wine, you ask? Much briefer,
 Much more concise than you might
 805 Have expected. Wine promotes sex–unless you take a skinful
 And drown your wits in drink.
 A fire's blown up by the wind, by the wind extinguished:
 A gentle breeze fans the flame, a harder gust
 Puts it out. Either keep off drink, or else hit the bottle
 810 Till you're riding high: nothing between will serve.
 My work is concluded: hang wreaths on my seaworn vessel,
 We've made it to the harbour for which I was bound.
 Soon, now, you'll discharge your vows to the inspired poet –
 Men and women alike, healed by my spell.

ON FACIAL TREATMENT FOR LADIES

Girls, learn from me what treatment will embellish
Your complexions, how beauty is best preserved.

Cultivation forced barren soil to yield rich cereal

Harvests, killed off the sharp

5 Encroaching briars; cultivation breeds out the bitter

Flavour of fruit, the grafted stock adopts

Alien bounty. What's cultivated delights: a lofty building

Is sheathed in gold leaf, black earth

Lies hid under marble, fleeces are dipped and redipped in
cauldrons

10 Of Tyrian dye, while Indian ivory's carved

Into exquisite *objets d'art*. Those old-time Sabine women,

Under the early kings, may have chosen to cultivate

Their fathers' fields, not their own persons: when the red-
cheeked

Matron in her high chair was forever spinning yarn

15 With calloused thumb, when the lambs her daughter pastured

She would pen herself, herself heap twigs and logs

On the family hearth. But your mothers bred delicate
daughters,

You want to be dressed in cloth of gold, you insist

On elaborate scented coiffures, each different from the last
one,

20 Your fingers must sparkle with gems,

And two of those Eastern stones from your chunky necklace

Used as an earbob would pull the lobe out of shape.

No criticism: you need to make yourselves attractive

These days, when the *men* are so smart –

25 Why, your husbands adorn themselves like regular ladies,

And a bride's hard put to it to outshine their style.

Girls preen to please themselves; it makes no difference
With whom they're in love, you can't
Fault them on turn-out. When they're lost in the depths of the
country

30 They still fix their hair: set them down on some remote
Mountain-top, they'll start primping. A certain pleasure's
Bred by self-satisfaction, a girl delights
In her own beauty. The peacock spreads its much-lauded
Tail-feathers, struts with dumb pride:

35 *That's* how to fan up love, don't touch any witch's hand-picked
Urticant roots, steer clear of her horrid craft,
Put no faith in herbals and potions, abjure the deadly
Stuff distilled by a mare in heat—all this

Is nonsense: Marsians can't burst snakes by incantations,

40 And rivers don't flow uphill to their source,
Any more than banging away on metal vessels
Will bring the moon down from the sky.

Your first concern, girls, should be for proper behaviour:

With a fine personality, features are sure to please.

45 Love of character's lasting, but age will ravage beauty,
The pretty face wrinkle and line,
Till a time will come when you'll hate to look in the mirror,
And misery etches those furrows deeper still.

But probity lasts well, will endure for ages, can carry

50 Love with its weight of years.

*

Let me show you how, when you first wake in the morning,

Your face can be bright and fresh.

Take imported Libyan barley, strip off its outer

Husk and chaff, measure two

55 Pounds of stripped grain, and add an equal measure

Of vetch steeped in ten raw eggs.

Let this mixture dry in the air, then have your donkey grind it

Slowly, taking the rough quern round; prepare

Two ounces of powdered hartshorn, taken from a vigorous

60 Stag's first fallen antlers; stir this well

Into the powdery meal, then sift the mixture,

At once, through fine-meshed sieves.

Take twelve narcissus-bulbs, skin them and pound them

(Use a marble block); add them in,

65 With two ounces each of gum and Tuscan spelt-seed,

And a pound and a half of honey. Any girl

Who uses a face-pack according to this prescription

Will shine brighter than her own

Mirror. Another good recipe: roast pale seeds of lupin,

70 Then fry up beans, the kind that bring flatulence—six

Measured pounds of each precisely—and have this mixture

Ground small in the black mill.

Make sure you've got white-lead, and essence of red natron,

And the iris that comes from Illyria: have them ground

75 By energetic young boys, but see that the proper

Weight is produced—one ounce apiece. The spots

On your face can be banished by means of a preparation

Extracted from bird's-nests, and known

As halcyon-cream. How much of this is sufficient,

80 You may ask? The answer is half an ounce. To make

This substance cohesive, and easy to rub all over

The body, add Attic honey from yellow combs.

Incense, though it placates the gods and angered spirits,

Is not *all* for flaming altars. When you mix

85 Incense with natron (the kind that's good for cleansing

The skin), measure each at one third

Of a pound in the scales. Add nine ounces of gum (but strip off

The bark first), plus a moderate-sized cube

Of rich oily myrrh. Then pound these up and sift them

90 Through a fine sieve; you'll need

Honey to settle the powder. Other useful ingredients

Are fennel—five scruples, to nine of myrrh –

And dried rose-leaves (one full handful), with salt from the

Libyan

Desert, and frankincense: the salt

95 And rose-leaves together should equal the weight of the
incense;

Use barley-water to bind them into a paste.

Though you keep this face-pack on for a short while only,

It will give you a fine complexion. I have known

One girl who moistened poppies in cold water,

100 Then pounded them up, and rubbed them on her cheeks...

Notes and References

THE AMORES

Epigram

The first edition of the *Amores*, in five books, is now lost: it may have coexisted for some while with the revised text in our possession. Ovid began to read his earliest poems in public when he was about eighteen (*Trist.* 4.10.57–60): the five original books were probably published (whether together or separately is unknown) by 15 BC, and the three-book second edition by 9 BC, and in any case not earlier than 11 or later than 1 BC. Ovid's main task, clearly, was the pruning of dead wood and juvenilia. What survived will also have been revised, rearranged, and partly rewritten (perhaps with Propertius Bks 1–3 as a conscious model).

BOOK 1

1.1

This introductory poem sets the mood for most of what follows. It is witty, charming, ironical and allusive. Yet the common claim that in the *Amores* Ovid begins and ends with love-poetry, not love, with literature rather than life, I find a little specious. What does Ovid in fact say? He was planning a Virgilian-style epic in hexameters, but unaccountably found himself writing elegiacs. Why? Because of Cupid. (The Roman habit of personifying everything from rust to door-hinges can be confusing at times.) Ovid in fact (cf. lines 19–20) was in love with love, a common symptom among sensitive young men, and one all too likely to produce bad and derivative poetry in one with a literary bent.

What he describes here—camouflaging his personal feelings, as so often, behind a smokescreen of mythic witticisms—is the psychological impact of falling in love with an actual person. The symptoms are well described in the following poem (*Am.* 1.2.1–10), and again masked by an elaborate quasi-mythical conceit, this time with political undertones. The girl is not identified yet: indeed, we do not learn her name till 1.5, by which time she has more than made her presence felt—always assuming that the same person is referred to throughout the earlier poems. Ovid is an expert at delayed-action effects: not for him the urgency of Propertius. I suspect that Ovid found his friend's heart-on-the-sleeve approach a trifle vulgar, and more than a trifle ridiculous. It should not be deduced from this, however, that he

despised Propertius' poetry (no one could devote so much space to parodying what he did not at heart admire), or that he lacked passionate feelings himself. We shall have ample evidence on both points throughout the *Amores*.

1ff. As most commentators remind us, the first word of this poem, *arma*, 'arms', is also that of Virgil's *Aeneid*. The reference is designed to point up a contrast *ab initio*. Ovid's programme, unlike that of Virgil, is private, *déagagé*, and not above covertly mocking Augustan imperial propaganda (see *Introd.*, pp. 44ff.).

There has been considerable discussion as to how far, if at all, poets such as Virgil, Horace or Propertius were under discreet pressure to produce Augustan propaganda, direct or indirect. The popular current view is that no such pressure existed. This goes hand in hand with the comparable belief that most mistresses and all homosexual relationships in Roman elegy are mere literary conventions derived from Alexandrian models, and that no real-life antecedent for any literary phenomenon should be sought if a plausible *topos* can be found instead. This seems to me (and, I note with relief, to one or two other recent writers) a misleading exaggeration. The pressure may not have been comparable to that applied today in, say, Soviet Russia, but it was real, dangerous, and not to be discounted. Similarly, literary sexual conventions were to a great extent derived from real-life models. 3–4 The hexameter, a primarily dactylic six-foot line, had been the metre of epic since Homer's day. Elegy employed the 'elegiac couplet', hexameter alternating with pentameter, the latter containing five feet only (or, to be more precise, two groups of two-and-a-half feet each). Epic, being lofty, political, military, and thus 'virile', was felt to outweigh erotic verse by far as serious poetry. Ovid, conscious of this, wavers between the defiant, the apologetic and the mocking-ironic in his attitude; his dominant instinct is to deflate what he undoubtedly regarded as pretentious.

9–10 'Our Lady of Wheatfields' is Ceres, the goddess of grain, crops and husbandry; the 'Virgin Huntress' is Diana (parallel to Greek Artemis), whose particular function, apart from professional virginity, was the chase. The 'War-God' (line 12) is Mars (Greek Ares).

21ff. The image of Cupid's arrows transfixing the heart with love goes back at least as far as Euripides, and was a commonplace of Hellenistic and Roman elegy: cf. *Prop.* 2.13.2.

29–30 Sea-myrtle was sacred to Aphrodite (Venus) as Ovid reminds us elsewhere (*Fast.* 4.15, *AA* 3.53, *Am.* 3.1.4). But there is more to this conclusion than meets the eye: we end, as we began, with an allusion to Virgil, an echo of *Georg.* 1.28, the invocation to Octavian—here

subtly ridiculed in a new context.

1.2

This seemingly innocuous poem (sometimes taken as a burlesque of Propertius 3.1) should be viewed in its historical context. In 24 BC Augustus had pacified Spain and Gaul. In 22 he had assumed tribunician power, and in 18 BC (see Introd. p. 71) he passed the first stage of his 'moral reform' legislation, which *inter alia* provided the penalty of exile for any man who seduced a freeborn married lady. No intelligent Roman could fail to perceive the essentially authoritarian nature of his rule. Literary men in particular would be sensitive to the policy of propaganda and tacit censorship which he initiated: anyone who chose to attack the official line would need to wear an effective mask. This poem may well be, at one level, a sharp piece of socio-political satire. The mocking description of Cupid's triumph could, all too easily, be transferred to those real celebrations still fresh in everyone's memory; and Cupid, as we are reminded in the final couplet, was related to the Emperor—a bland sideswipe at the deification principle, and perhaps a hint as to how the poem could be read by those who were so inclined. If Augustus, for instance, chose to take lines 28–35 in a political sense, they could be made to look very compromising.

13 A clear echo of Propertius 2.4.3.

23 Myrtle, which was sacred to Venus (see above, *Am.* 1.1.29–30 and note) could also be used to crown the celebrant of a Roman *ovatio*, a minor triumph 'in which the general, *after an easy, bloodless victory, or after a victory over slaves*[my italics], made his public entrance...' (Lewis and Short s.v. *ovatio*). The mocking nature of this passage emerges at once from a comparison with any 'straight' description, e.g. *Trist.* 4.2, esp. lines 19ff., 47ff.

24 Who was Cupid's stepfather? *Am.* 2.9b.24 identifies Mars, Venus' lover, in this role.

31 'Conscience', *Mens Bona*, had her, or its, own temple on the Capitol.

57–2 These lines again parody, or echo, Propertius (2.16.41–2). The relationship between Augustus and Cupid was established through Aeneas, Venus' son by Anchises. Propertius' lines were a perfectly serious eulogy of Caesar *qua* magnanimous conqueror. Ovid must have been alluding to the campaign in Spain (26–19 BC). Augustus fell ill during the first year's fighting against the Cantabrian tribes, and took no further part in this 'pacification exercise', which was finally wound up, with brutal efficiency, by Agrippa.

It is generally supposed that this poem must be taken as a mere erotic *jeu d'esprit*, the mischievous declaration of eternal fidelity by an elsewhere self-confessed Casanova. But Ovid deals in the raw material of passion as unmistakably, and as wittily, as Byron (another great literary *farceur*) did in *Don Juan*. Why should each mood-fidelity and Don Juanism alike—not have been genuine *at the time of writing*? The relationship with Corinna was still fresh: only later would the role of uninvolved rake come to offer psychological protection. Poets and lovers are not notable for academic consistency. Whitman's comment applies: 'Do I contradict myself? Very well, I contradict myself.' Light-hearted love may be this poem's sustaining theme, but Ovid's verse generally turns out 'double-bottomed'—as one scholar puts it—and more often than not, as perhaps here, sexual fun carries undertones of anti-Augustan politics. There had been political *desultores* (see below, note to line 15) both during and after the Civil Wars. Ovid, like other Roman poets, commonly equated Augustus with Jupiter (the deification principle made this almost inevitable); and despite his stern programmes for moral 'reform at home, already launched, Augustus' own sexual adventures (like those of his daughter and granddaughter) were notorious. Again, oblique criticism of Augustan propaganda, and of the deification principle, comes through clearly.

6ff. Elsewhere in the *Amores* (3.15.5–6), Ovid shows himself carefully snobbish over his 'middle-class' status as an *eques*, emphasizing that his pedigree went back some generations: no post-war *parvenu* he. For his father's thrift see the 'autobiographical elegy', *Tria*. 4.10.21–2, and *Intro.*, p. 26.

11–14 Like Propertius in a similar situation (3.2.7ff.), Ovid has the backing of 'divine inspiration' (Apollo, Bacchus), plus his own genius; he also promises to be faithful, a new gambit.

15 But cf. 2.4.9–10 (with my note, pp. 292–3), where the Don Juan motif is advanced with cheerful impenitence. The 'sexual circus-rider', *desultor amoris*, was a term borrowed from the ring-performer who leapt from one horse to another at full gallop—a trick at least as old as Homer: see *Iliad* 15.679ff.

21–4 Io, daughter of the river-god Inachus, attracted Zeus' favours; but when Hera became angrily jealous, Zeus turned Io into a heifer. Hera tormented the heifer with a gadfly, which drove the poor creature crazy. She finally recovered her sanity in Egypt, where she was worshipped as Isis. Leda, wife of Tyndareus, King of Sparta, was also seduced by Zeus, who took the form of a swan for the occasion (an episode which seems to exert an odd psychological fascination on

artists of all periods). Some versions claim that, as a result, Leda hatched Helen from an egg. Europa, daughter of King Agenor of Tyre, also succumbed to Zeus' advances, this time in the guise of a bull, which swam off with her to Crete, where she bore Minos and Rhadamanthus.

1.4

In Book 1 of the *Ars* (33–4) Ovid was to write: 'Safe love, legitimate liaisons / Will be my theme—this poem breaks no taboos.' In fact the *Ars* is quite clearly aimed at fashionable married ladies, and the disclaimer merely serves the same purpose as the prefatory note to a *roman à clef*, declaring all the characters wholly imaginary and based on no living people. Ovid (unlike his predecessors Catullus, Tibullus and Propertius, all of whom seem to have conducted affairs with technically respectable married ladies) was obliged, at least after 18 BC (see p. 71), to pay lip-service to Augustus' moral legislation. Earlier, in the *Amores*, he had not been nearly so careful. Not only in the present poem, but at 2.2, 2.19, 3.4 and 3.8, it is made quite clear that married women of Ovid's own class, no less than freedwomen and *meretrices* (prostitutes), are fair game for amatory adventure.

1–2 The ambiguous word *vir*—which can mean both 'husband' and 'lover': a godsend for Ovid—here bears the former connotation: at line 64 the *vir* is described as enjoying Ovid's mistress (again unnamed) 'under licence', *iure coacta*, i.e. through the exercise of marital rights. I have, wherever possible or appropriate, translated *vir* by the equally ambiguous (and more approximate) term 'man'.

Once again we have a theme which disregards, if it does not directly attack, Augustan moral legislation. Ambiguity is what we would expect: when the penalty for seducing a married woman was exile to an island, even a poet exploiting a traditional *topos* would be more prone to watch his step. By the time he came to write the *Art*, Ovid was loudly protesting that his advice was for courtesans only: by then he must have learnt that to impugn the virtue of upper-class Roman matrons was a potentially dangerous sport. Yet even this did not prevent him from turning the dinner-party theme to good use later: see AA 1.565–608, with my notes ad loc. (pp. 356ff.).

7 The point of the myth of the centaurs' drunken violence at the wedding-feast of Pirithotts and Hippodameia is 'to show that the pursuit of Hippodameia by the savage, drunken Centaur meant very little when not even a sober, civilized man could easily refrain from enjoying Corinna's... charms' (Forde *Helikon* 6, 1966, 645–6).

15ff. The various 'clandestine' signals between lovers at dinnerparties

and on other such public occasions formed a stock theme for Augustan elegists. It is hard to see how such inherently ludicrous gestures could ever have constituted a secret code: they seem positively to invite attention (if not to suggest some sort of spastic tic or variation on Parkinson's Disease), and Ovid, a poet with a better-developed sense of the ridiculous than most, clearly knew this very well.

35–40 Here Ovid plays, amusingly, with an archaic legal sanction, the *numus iniectio* ('lay hand upon you'). In a process known as *vindicatio*, a claimant would 'lay hand' on property to assert ownership. Ovid thus claims citizen-rights over his mistress's charms and person; the application of a venerable law to this sophisticated and far from respectable situation has its own piquant charm.

45–8 I translate *dulce peregit opus* as 'petted to climax', though with some misgivings; it is hard to visualize a (supposedly unobserved) act of mutual masturbation at dinner, whether the guests were reclining on couches or not.

53 The phrase *somno vinoque*, '[drowned] in sleep and liquor', echoes Virgil, *Aen.* 2.265, but in a calculatedly ridiculous context.

55ff. Cf. AA 1.603ff.

67 Cf. below, *Am.* 3.7, *passim*.

69–70 Ovid here, as in other places (cf. e.g. *Am.* 2.13.6, and in particular 3.14.1–2, 37–40), reveals a very human desire not to acknowledge unwelcome truths about the conduct of his *inamorata*.

1.5

This is among the most charming and direct of Ovid's erotic poems: a visually precise miniature, divided, triptych-like, into three neat and expressive sections (lines 1–8; 9–16; 17–24). The eternal Mediterranean siesta is caught with swift, economic strokes. Political interests are wholly absent, and satirical ones nearly so; but Ovid cannot resist one allusive flick at Corinna. Having compared her to Semiramis, the mythical Queen of Nineveh, Ovid then abruptly adorns this tired cliché by bringing in *Lais* as a second parallel—*Lais* having been one of the most famous and highly paid whores of antiquity. This is a straightforward account of a successful act of love. Such a description is, surprisingly, unparalleled in previous Roman love-poetry, and appears to be Ovid's own creation.

3–6 The windows are in fact wooden shutters, with transverse slats, of the sort that are still common throughout the Mediterranean, and have changed little since those depicted in Pompeian wall-paintings. The light filters through the slats; one shutter has been left ajar to

catch whatever afternoon breeze may be going.

7–8 This is the first point at which we get a hint that the scene involves something more than a solitary siesta. So far Ovid's camera-eye has simply panned inquisitively round a bedroom empty except for himself. Now he reflects that the setting would be ideal for the seduction of a shy girl.

9–10 Corinna's entry is abrupt, and she is very far—except in the most perfunctory sense—from being a 'modest girl'. It has been suggested, in line with the Corinna-as-fiction theory, that from here on is a dream, or fantasy: that Ovid is simply having an erotic siesta vision, solo.

A potentially more profitable line of approach might be to ask a few pertinent questions about the domestic arrangements which this pleasant seduction scene implies. Where is Ovid? Presumably in his own house, since he is scarcely likely to set up a siesta in his mistress's bedroom without her knowledge. Then where does Corinna appear from? Has she come through the streets alone? Socially improbable to a degree. With a maid, then? If so, where is the maid now? And what about the other occupants of the house? We may assume, if we like, that Ovid, as a habitual Casanova, had a discreet and well-trained hall-porter. But where, we wonder, is his wife? While it is true that, on his own account, Ovid began writing about Corinna in late adolescence (TV. 4.10. 57–60), he also tells us that he was married while still a mere boy (ibid., 69–70), twice in succession. Unless he maintained a discreet *pied-a-terre* (e.g. a friend's house, like Catullus)—this cannot be ruled out, but is unlikely—or alternatively, a theory that will always have takers, made up the whole relationship and incident from a mind well-stocked with Hellenistic poetic cliché, we have to ask ourselves how it came about that Ovid and his *inamorata*, not only here but on various other occasions, had such mysteriously easy access to each other. In this context the theory that the secret of Corinna's identity lay in her being, not Ovid's mistress, but his *first wife*, clearly has a good deal to recommend it.

1.6

This poem embodies the motif of the *paraclausithyron*, the song sung by a lover outside his mistress's front door when (most often because of coquettishness or a disobliging husband) he has failed to win admission. The tradition is both Greek and Roman, though the Augustan elegists made it peculiarly their own.

Generally the lover has been to a party: somewhat tipsy, a torch in one hand and a wreath askew on his head—as here—he serenades his *inamorata* from the street, presumably accompanied by an *obbligato*

chorus of angry watchdogs. When his pleas prove ineffectual, he may threaten to batter the door down, or, in more maudlin vein, to commit suicide. Finally he hangs his wreath on the door like a visiting card, scribbles some verses (lovelorn or obscene, according to taste or mood) under it, and either lies down on the step to sleep it off, or else makes his departure, temporarily defeated.

The poem can be compared with Theocritus' Idyll 2, 'The Sorcerer', where a similar symmetrical pattern, complete with repetitive refrain, at once strikes the reader (cf. also Virgil *Ecl.* 8, Ovid *Her.* 9. 143f.). The motif in that case is clearly magical: a woman is casting a spell to bring back her lover, and the poem itself forms the incantatory accompaniment to her actions. I would suggest that Ovid has the same idea in mind here. The whole poem, besides being a *paraclausithyron*, forms a magical—or parody of a magical—incantation (note the *nine* stanzas, a favourite number in spells) designed to sway the will of the janitor, and perhaps to slide free the doorbolts by superhuman means.

The equation of love's campaigning with military service suits the whips-and-suffering mood of the *paraclausithyron* very well. Ovid can present himself, at one level of the image, as a sort of one-man erotic commando-force on a night-exercise. Better still, by using a live porter, chained to the wall, he acquires a ready-made symbol of his own would-be *servitium*. When he says that, if he only had the chance, he would assume the porter's shackles, the reader smiles—because, in a metaphorical sense, Ovid is wearing them already.

53 Boreas, the North Wind, ravished away Oreithyia, daughter of King Erechtheus of Attica, while she was playing by the Ilissus river (near where the Fix brewery now stands), and took her to his 'seven-chambered grotto' in the Rhipaeian mountains; there he sired Zetes and Calais on her. Cf. Ovid *Met.* 6.682–721.

1.7

Latin lovers, as we all know, are expert at noisy quarrels and even noisier reconciliations. At least since Terence's day there has been a tradition that 'lovers' quarrels are the renewal of love' (*Andria* 555). In our own time C. Day Lewis (a poet with a good classical education) could write of 'each quarrel that came like a night to blind us / And closer to bind us'. The question, as so often, is to gauge Ovid's mood. The incident certainly stuck in his mind: see below, AA 2.169, cf. 3.368–70. Is he in earnest or is the entire poem once more a deadpan put-on, a parody of conventional emotion as well as of the literary genre to which the emotion gave rise?

It is clear that the poem cannot be *wholly* serious: the last couplet,

with Ovid telling his girl to go fix her hair and stop him feeling embarrassed, is proof enough of that. The mythological parallels, too, are ludicrously inflated: Ajax, Orestes, Diomedes wounding Aphrodite before Troy. Ovid even makes political capital out of this unlikely incident by suggesting, ironically, that he should celebrate a triumph for this victory over a girl (35–40). The jolt in the coda is a characteristically Ovidian trick; but I can't help feeling that what we have here is not so much pure mischievous *nequitia*, but rather an effort to camouflage acute and shamefaced embarrassment. (For an interesting revised version of the scene see AA 2.169–76, with my note, p. 368). However one may wrap up the incident with mythic trimmings and parodic exaggeration, the fact remains that to assault a girl is neither funny nor forgivable; and to assault her *in a girlish fashion*—pulling her hair, scratching her cheeks—is even more dubious.

The mood, in fact, is ambivalent. By exaggerating his misdemeanour Ovid hopes to remove it from the realm of serious crime altogether; by indulging in violent self-recrimination he meets the psychological need for confession and repentance (why otherwise write such a poem at all?), while at the same time indicating that the whole business is really a joke. Even if the incident is fictitious, and the narrator simply a *persona* playing variations on a literary *topos*, the same psychological considerations apply.

7–18 Ajax, baulked of Odysseus' armour (which had been adjudicated to Odysseus), determined to slay the Greek leaders whom he held responsible, but Athena took away his wits, so that he slaughtered the army's sheep and cattle instead. Orestes is said to have used Apollo's bow, not very effectively, in self-defence against the Erinyes (Furies). Atalanta, daughter of Iasus and Clymene, was a famous huntress, loved by Meleager, courted and won by Milanion, who beat her in a foot-race by dropping a golden apple in her path. For Theseus' desertion of Ariadne on Naxos see *Her.* 10 *passim*. She either died in childbirth there, or else (less probably) was rescued and wedded by the god Dionysus. Cassandra the seer wore the fillet of a priestess: the reference is half-joking, with an allusion to Ovid's girl and her disarrayed hair, thus effectively undercutting the previous mythical rodomontade. It is more than likely that Ovid—the literary allusions being not over-apt—was in each case thinking of some well-known picture.

31–4 After wounding Aeneas in battle, Diomedes also attacked Aphrodite.

35–40 Again, Ovid sets up the image of a triumph in circumstances which make not only the institution but in particular the celebrant look ridiculous. The details are mocked by parody and exaggeration: it

is the bombastic self-aggrandizement which Ovid sets out to exploit. We should also remember that Augustus' most famous victory, that of Actium (31 BC) was won over the Egyptian queen Cleopatra: line 38 thus acquires an ambiguous flavour. Cf. *Am.* 2.12.8.

60 Why is it that Ovid only *now* begins to feel culpable? And *how* are the girl's tears his blood? Presumably in the sense that the sight of them wounds him: he bleeds because pierced with remorse, and the tears which caused the wound now become the wound itself. It is a metaphysical conceit worthy of the seventeenth century; and like most such conceits, its emotional impact is stronger than its logic.

1.8

The old bawd with a sideline in magic and the urge to make the poet's mistress better herself through a wealthier alliance is a familiar stage-property of Roman elegy, which probably borrowed her, at one remove, from Greek mime or New Comedy. Her chief function for the elegist was to lecture an innocent Cynthia or Corinna on popular gold-digging techniques. Such persons undoubtedly existed, but our view of them is heavily overlaid with literary fantasy. Ovid's *lena* derives, in essence, from Propertius 4.5, where we similarly find the witch's sales-pitch sandwiched between disobliging comments on the witch herself, delivered *in propria persona* by the poet.

Though Ovid's treatment has a lightness of touch and a blandly sophisticated wit lacking in that of Propertius, both portraits suggest a literary formalization of something once more serious and more frightening. The uninitiated formerly believed in witches; perhaps they still did: but for the sophisticated man of letters in Augustan Rome the bawd-sorceress was no more than a convenient figure of fun. As has often been remarked, there is an odd discrepancy between the horrific magical powers attributed to these crones, and the workaday hints on husband-hunting which we see them actually dispensing. In a poem such as Theocritus' Idyll 2, 'The Sorceress', magic is treated very seriously indeed, and gives every sign of being drawn from actual contemporary practice, as evidenced by the surviving magical papyri. The Roman elegiac poets are equally *au fait* with such activities, but tend to treat them more lightly, as mere literary decoration: Ovid, the apotheosis of intellectual rationalism, finds double pupils, gravity-defying rivers, ghost-raising and similar items of the stock-in-trade no more than a bad superstitious joke. The build-up of the old hag here is in deliberate and anticlimactic contrast to what we actually see her doing.

Extra piquancy is lent to her advice by the fact that it could very well have come from Ovid himself: cf. AA 1.417–18, 2.251–72, with

my notes, pp. 352 and 370–72. Lines 39ff. in particular sum up the attitude propounded in Bk 3 of the *Art of Love*. *Rusticitas*, the country simplicity of character to which Tibullus at least paid lip-service, has become, in Ovid's book, a regrettable naivety. His didacticism aims to turn each simple country girl into a sophisticated *demi-mondaine*. Thus the poem becomes, not merely satire, but a kind of double-level self-parody: it is interesting, and revealing, to turn back to it after *The Art of Love* and to study the multi-level literary and social *persona* which Ovid here adopts. Superstition is ridiculed, and elegiac earnestness (in the person of Propertius) mocked by means of elegant pastiche. Behind the bawd's bleary, raddled mask lurks Ovid himself, tempting his own girl with more profitable prospects elsewhere. His shadow (line 109) indeed betrayed him: the poem resembles a receding hall of mirrors.

5–18 The various practices and phenomena mentioned here are all well-known from ancient literature, but vary in kind. One group—the spells, the herbs, the bullroarer, the *hippomanes*—forms, as it were, a witch's *materia magica*. The other represents her various large and miraculous powers: reversing rivers, manipulating weather, bloodying the moon, earth-splitting, ghost-raising, and transformation at will into an owl. Her double pupils serve to identify her as an authentic witch.

19 'Our relationship': but what was it? Normally the phrase *thalamos pudicos* would imply marriage, and it is tempting to guess (cf. my note on *Am* 1.5.9–10, pp. 273–4) that this is an early poem involving Ovid's first wife. On the other hand the phrase may be suggestively ironic or ambiguous.

39–44 The rape of the Sabine women (who, respectable if malodorous, held out for monogamy) is described by Livy, 1.9–13, and by Ovid, in greater detail, at *AA* 1.101–34 (cf. my note, pp. 341–2). This delectable passage, with its tongue-in-cheek air and its contemptuous attitude to *rusticitas*, foreshadows the *Art of Love*: see esp. *AA* 1.60, 2.566.

47–8 Both the bow and the horn here carry sexual implications, and were common terms in *sermo amatorius*.

57–8 Ovid deploys a neat ambiguity here: 'read many thousand [poems]' or 'collect many thousand [coins]'? The Latin (*milia multa leges*) could mean either: I have tried in my version to preserve something of the double sense.

64 For the practice of marking newly arrived foreign slaves' feet with chalk or gypsum see *Juv.* 1.111.

73–4 The simulation of a headache to avoid intercourse is frequently mentioned by the elegiac poets; to plead religious abstinence because of an imminent feast of Isis seems also to have been a popular excuse.

85–6 The gods proverbially refrained from taking lovers' oaths seriously: cf. *Am.* 2.1.19f., 3.3.11, 3.11.21; *AA* 1.634.

1.9

To the 'straight' patriotic Roman, love-making as a preferred *occupation* (as opposed to a casual and intermittent activity, with whore or wife) was unmanly, as indeed was the full-time pursuit of poetry; it could be summed up in the word *desidia* (or its adjective *desidiosus*) as 'slackness' or 'an easy option'. Ovid, on the contrary, claims (31–2, 45–6) that love, not war, is the best *cure* for slackness. The elaborate parallel drawn between the soldier's life and the lover's may contain a cover streak of self-justification (perhaps predictable in a young man born too late for the Civil Wars, and never himself subjected to military service in the field); but it is by no means intended as a compliment to patriotic militarism, which Ovid detested and despised.

The notion was to be propounded again in Bk 2 of the *Art of Love* (lines 231–8, 559, 565–6, 674): *militiae species amor est*, 'love is a species of warfare'. But, we note, it emerges as a somewhat specialized branch of the military art, with an emphasis on open-air bivouacking and siege activities: what Ovid once more has in mind as the central feature of courtship is the vigil outside his mistress's closed door. The *obstacles* put in a lover's path form, for him, the essence of the game: as he several times tells us, easy conquests make for boredom. But there is more to it than this: *militia* implies an *adversary*, an object of attack. The parallels drawn in this poem are psychologically suggestive. Soldier and lover both sleep rough out of doors, stand guard before a closed door (7–8). They must be prepared for long journeys and severe weather (15–16, cf. *AA* 2.235–8). They are both on siege operations, determined to break in the gates of a city—or a front door (19–20). Both favour the notion of a surprise attack (21–2, 25–6). All this is highly revealing: seldom can the so-called 'war between the sexes' have been delineated in such graphic terms from a male viewpoint, with phallic predators manoeuvring for an opening against calculating gold-diggers, with both sides simply after sex or money, and bringing an elaborate technique into play to gain their immediate ends.

23–4 Rhesus, King of Thrace, came to Troy as an ally of the Trojans against the Greeks. He was famous for his wind-swift white mares: Diomedes and Odysseus, however, made a nocturnal commando raid

on his camp, killed Rhesus himself, and got away with the mares.

33–40 To counter the deeply ingrained and primitive belief that love (or, more specifically, the ejaculation of sperm) induces unmanly sloth, Ovid lists various heroic fighters whose prowess in battle was not diminished by their erotic preoccupations; all are chosen from Homer. (We may note one glaring omission: Paris, who in this context would not have suited Ovid's book at all.) Lines 33–6 reveal Ovid's immediate source as Propertius 2.22.27–32, where we find the line *nullus amor vires eripit ipse suas*—'never does love exhaust its own strength', and the same examples: Achilles and Briseis, Hector's farewell to Andromache. The famous tale of how Ares (Mars) seduced Aphrodite (Venus) and was trapped in bed with her by Hephaestus (Mulciber) is told at length by Homer in the *Odyssey* (*Od* 8.266–369: cf. Ovid met. 4.169–89, AA 2.561–92, with my note, pp. 377–8).

41–2 The picture of the poet as a lazy individual, lying on a day-bed under a shady tree and scribbling verses, was well-established by Ovid's day. This is socially suggestive when we remember that *otium*, leisure, as opposed to *negotium*, business, was an upper-class Roman's ideal. It is clear, however, that, just as only certain occupations (soldiering, government, law, estate management) were socially acceptable, so, equally, one's leisure must be employed in a manner that did not contravene the social norms.

1.10

The shifting tones of this poem have caused some confusion among decent middle-class commentators, perhaps because Ovid is (by any serious standards) so splendidly outrageous in his moral inconsistency. Ovid begins by comparing his *inamorata* to heroines from Greek mythology: Helen, Leda, Europa—all, we note, victims of seduction. Idealism is brought down to earth with a rattle of cash-boxes by her asking for presents. Only the whore should do this: for lovers the pleasure should be mutual (lines 35–6). Even farmyard animals, Ovid claims (25ff.), rut in spontaneous and mutual pleasure, though observation does not always bear this out. This theme, reasonable enough in itself, is now further explored, by means of vivid illustrations from everyday life and mythical *exempla* such as Tarpeia and Eriphyle. Ideal and real are juxtaposed and contrasted through a sketch of the contemporary urban scene, with its pimping, bribes and judicial corruption.

But of course, Ovid can never maintain a moral stance for long, nor is this his object. At lines 53–4 the reader is brought up with a jerk when he hears that it's all right to dun *the rich* for presents, since *they* can afford them. Morality, in fact, has abruptly flown the coop. What

has Ovid to offer? Immortality through song. This is the atmosphere of *Am.* 1.3 (with the old bawd of 1.8 muttering disconcertingly offstage). To complete the moral *peripeteia* the poet's final plea, in the coda, is to let him give presents—which by now he is quite ready to do—but of his own accord, not in answer to demands. The sense of spontaneity must be preserved. Having lurched from mock-idealism to spoof cynicism, the poem closes with a funny-sad (and psychologically acute) comment on the male romantic ego. Ovid considers the various forms Zeus assumed to seduce human maidens—swan, eagle, bull—and hints at another manifestation, most appropriate for what is to follow: the shower of gold in which he penetrated Danaë's defences. Is it possible that once again, as in 1.3 (see above, p. 270), Ovid is hinting indirectly at the Zeus (Jupiter) = Augustus equation? And if so, what does it tell us about his relationship to the girl?

1–6 Leda and Helen need no glossing. Amyclone was Danaüs' daughter; while out with a pail on her head to fetch water, during a drought, she succumbed to Poseidon's advances (he having opportunely rescued her from a priapic satyr), and was shown by him the springs of Lerna.

11–12 Ovid's objections to gold-digging girls are repeated in similar terms at RA 321–2.

39–40 Under the Lex Cincia of M. Cincius Alimentus (204 BC, reconfirmed by Augustus 18/17 BC), an advocate could not even charge a fee for his services, let alone accept bribes: *ne quis 06 causam orandam pecuniam donumve acciperet*. It goes without saying (as Ovid's remarks make clear) that this statute was systematically circumvented; Augustus apparently renewed it, but without noticeable effect.

49–50 Tarpeia, the daughter of Rome's citadel-commander in the quasi-mythical days of Romulus, was bribed by Tatius, the King of the Sabines, to let a commando-group of his soldiers into the fortress. As a price for her services the girl demanded 'what they had on their shield-arms', i.e. their heavy gold bracelets and jewelled rings. Once they were inside, however, the men crushed her to death under their shields.

51–2 Harmonia, daughter of Ares and Aphrodite, received on her wedding-day, from Cadmus, a necklace which proved fatal to all who owned it. Polyneices, son of Oedipus, inherited the necklace and gave it to Eriphyle as a bribe, to persuade her husband Amphiaraus to march with him against Thebes as one of the Seven. This she did (though Amphiaraus had warned her never to accept a gift from Polyneices). Amphiaraus, having promised to abide by Eriphyle's decision, went to Thebes—though as a seer he well knew he would

meet his death there. Before leaving he made his sons, including Alcmaeon, swear that, on coming of age, they would kill their mother Eriphyle and themselves assault Thebes.

56–7 Alcinous, King of the Phaeacians on Scheria, was famous for his orchards, which are described at length in the *Odyssey*, 7.112–32.

1.11, 1.12

These two poems are naturally taken in conjunction: they form a thematically related diptych (cf. 2.7 and 8; 2.9 and 9B; 2.13 and 14; 3.11A and 11B) which might almost symbolize the two folded leaves of the writing-tablet, their common linking element. Ovid sends a hopeful *billet-doux*—perhaps a love-poem, a forerunner of the published *Amores*—to Corinna by the hand of Napë, her personal maid, who acts as their go-between. Even if Ovid's passion was stimulated by frustration, there is nothing *prima facie* about these poems to prove that Corinna was not modelled on his wife, or that husband and wife were not engaged in private marital games of a type familiar to psychologists. At the close of 1.11 Ovid is strung to high and optimistic expectation, which is swiftly dashed by a curt and negative response from Corinna herself: exactly the kind of communication which annoyed Ovid most (1.11.19–24). The only brief note *he* looks kindly on is a rendezvous. 1.12, after a perfunctory attempt to account for his bad luck by mere superstition (which would, of course, undercut the idea of Corinna's active indifference), devotes itself to a commination service against the wretched writing-tablets, the unwitting instrument of his humiliation.

1.11

1–4 The various uses and advantages of a maid to help one's intrigues are set out at greater length in AA 1.351–98. One of the maid's main duties was attending to her mistress's hair (cf. AA 3.133–68).

1.12

9–10 For the bitterness of Corsican honey see Virgil, *Ecl.* 9.30. Hemlock, of course, was best known as the poison used to execute criminals in Athens, its most famous victim being Socrates.

13 The purpose of dropping the tablet at a crossroads was not solely to have it crushed by passing traffic, but to prepare the reader for the gibbet image which follows (lines 17–18): criminals were hanged at crossroads, just as, later, vampires were buried there, and crossroads were sacred to Hecate.

19–20 Both Greeks and Romans regarded the night-flying screech-owl,

noctua, *strix* or *bubo*, with peculiar fear and loathing: partly because of its uncanny whickering cry, but also because of the widespread belief that these creatures were really witches in metamorphosis. The appearance of the vulture, though a scavenger, here is probably due to a slip on Ovid's part, since the vulture is not commonly listed among birds of ill-omen. Nor (as was well known in antiquity) did it normally make its nest in accessible trees.

1.13

The poem is a versified *suasoria*, a rhetorical exercise in persuasion: a witty, subtle, well-argued address to the Dawn with the declared object of delaying her arrival for the benefit of lovers (though not, seemingly, to encourage further coitus so much as to give them a comfortable sleep afterwards). This conceit is neatly articulated to an ironic appraisal of the conventions governing such myths, in particular the portrayal of natural phenomena as persons.

Aurora is, at one level, the dawn as we all know it, complete with dew, glowing sunrise, cool stillness: the prelude (even more strikingly in antiquity) to the day's work, which in Ovid's time began with first light and was ended by darkness. But Aurora is also an all-too-anthropomorphic deity, with an elderly (indeed positively antique) husband, and a well-known penchant for young men. It is this ambiguity in her nature which Ovid explores, with urbane and contrapuntal irony. Three couplets in this poem, including the first and last (lines 1–2, 33–4 and 47–8), are third-person statements concerning Aurora, a frame within which to place the two sections of the *suasoria* addressed to her.

The dawn is the best time for lovers to sleep (or to sleep it off)—a reminder that *inertia* and *otium* are a characteristic ideal for *rentier* writers like Horace and Ovid, to be interpreted in their own peculiar way, which might not be shared by statesmen and conservative patriots (see above, p. 279). Perhaps that is why, in his survey of Roman early risers, Ovid omits the politician. Sailors and soldiers, ploughmen, farmers, schoolboys, housewives—all must obey Aurora's summons (but Horace, we know, was a late riser, and Ovid may well have followed his example). The dawn comes up; public, if not private, life creaks into action; yawning, exhausted lovers must go home. It is at this point that Ovid begins to infiltrate his own argument with comic anthropomorphism. He gets cross with Aurora, as one might with any unpredictable lady. He hopes her axle breaks, or her horses stumble into cloud (as though cloud were solid terrestrial mud). He repeats scandalous stories about her affairs, including the implication that Memnon was sired by some unknown

black lover.

Ovid's rhetorical argument now proceeds to its refutation of his adversary's (unspoken) objections. Aurora will argue that delay is physically impossible. But what about the Moon and Endymion, or— even more appropriate—Zeus-Jupiter's extended night of love with Alcmene? The speech ends, and Ovid once more addresses his reader directly. In two lethal lines, one of his most effective and devastating codas, the entire elegant fancy of a living, persuadable Aurora is blown sky-high. The mythopoeic world is flatly undercut by smiling rationalism, and we are left, simply, with a clever, lazy, ironic, over-articulate man making plausible excuses for staying in bed a little longer: the presence or absence of a girl seems almost irrelevant. Dawn—with a last blush, an obliging nod to the pathetic fallacy—comes up on time, as we always knew it would; the rhetoric has been exquisitely and deliberately useless. All that remains at the poem's end is Ovid's mischievous, sexless, disembodied grin, something akin to that of the Cheshire Cat. As usual, he has the last laugh.

1–2 The 'blonde day-bringer' was Aurora or Eos, the personified Dawn. She was also, traditionally, a compulsive fancier of handsome youths, including Cephalus, Cleitus, Astraeus and Orion. One of the most gloriously handsome of all was Tithonus, Priam's brother and son of Laomedon, whom she married. She prayed the gods to bestow immortality on him, which they did; but she forgot at the same time to ask them to give him eternal youth, so that eventually he withered away into a piping ancient husk, like a cicada—hence Ovid's description of him as her 'doddering husband'.

3–4 Memnon, the son of Tithonus and Aurora, was, mysteriously, black, an Ethiopian prince. Hephaestus, at Aurora's request, forged him armour with which to fight against the Greeks at Troy, but he was nevertheless slain by Achilles, and Aurora wept for him every morning: her tears are the dawn dew. His mourning comrades were changed into birds called Memnonides, and Memnon, according to Ovid (*Met.* 13.576–622ff.), became a bird himself.

11–12 The remark about navigation is no mere poetic conceit, but plain fact. Mediterranean sailors, now as in antiquity, navigate solely by the stars, and very well too. During the day Greek sailors were— are—heavily dependent on coastal bearings, and never strayed beyond sight of land if they could help it; it was the Phoenicians who first worked out a system of dead-reckoning.

17–18 Roman schoolchildren began their classes at, or even before, dawn.

19–21 The court referred to was the praetor's tribunal, which handled

civil suits. The 'one-word pledge' was the verb *spondeo*, 'I guarantee', and the official formula for going bail was: 'I guarantee to render a like sum' (ego *idem dare spondeo*).

39–40 Line 40 has earned its own immortality by being quoted (slightly wrong) by Marlowe's Faustus, in his last great soliloquy. The son Aurora bore Cephalus was—with a gesture towards marital *pietas*—named Tithonus. Afterwards she obligingly sent Cephalus back to his distraught wife Procris.

43–4 Selene or Luna, the personified Moon, fell in love with a beautiful youth named Endymion. She put him to sleep for all eternity in a glen or cave on Mt Latmos in Caria, so that she could kiss him each evening without his knowledge.

45–6 The occasion was that on which Zeus (doubling for Amphitryon) slept with Alcmene and sired Heracles.

1.14

Whether the incident described in this poem be fact or fiction, it cannot but remind us that Mediterranean humour is, *au fond*, peasant humour—masculine-oriented, at times amazingly cruel: I have seen a small Greek crowd in fits of laughter over a dying donkey—and fundamentally different from our own. The *persona* which Ovid here presents is sophisticated enough, but self-satisfied, cruel, and anti-feminine to a degree. The tone is that of a bitchy homosexual, the teasing far from kind. He mocks the distressed girl, who may have been silly, may have ignored his suggestions, but was obviously trying to make herself look good, presumably for his benefit, and has now suffered one of the worst catastrophes that can befall a woman's natural vanity. After spending over fifty lines telling the poor creature that it's all her own fault, and how could she have been so idiotic, he suddenly (and characteristically) relents in the last couplet and says, in effect: Don't worry, your hair's bound to grow out again.

5–6 Chinese silks were well-known in Rome. Silk was known to the Greeks as early as Aristotle's day, and imported in the wake of Alexander's conquests; but silkworms were not actually cultivated in Europe until the sixth century AD.

33–4 The picture referred to here is the well-known Aphrodite (or Venus) Anadyomene, by the Greek artist Apelles (fourth century BC). This painting had lately been brought by Augustus from Cos to Rome, where it caused something of a sensation; Augustus dedicated it to the deified Caesar, an appropriate enough gesture, since Venus—sometimes, as here, known as Dione, her mother's name: see, e.g., AA 2.593—was Caesar's putative ancestress through her relationship with

Aeneas' father Anchises (cf. above, p. 270). Ovid refers to the picture several times (AA 3.224, 401–2, *Tr.* 2.526–7, *EP* 4.1.29), and always emphasizes the fact that the goddess is holding her wet hair in her hands and wringing it out to dry, a gesture he seems to have found particularly attractive (cf. my note on AA 3.133–68, p. 387).

39–42 Another glimpse into the sub-world of magic–literary here, and conventionalized, but resting on an all-too-real tradition of spells and, very probably, poisons (no accident that the Greek word *pharma-kon* means both, and ‘medicine’ into the bargain–hence our term ‘pharmacy’).

45–6 What German conquest was this? The point is important, since it helps substantially in deciding whether the second edition of the *Amores* contained new material, or merely revised earlier existing poems. As we have seen (above, p. 30), the likeliest date for the publication of the first edition was 16/15 BC. Now the Germans in question, as we know from line 49, were the Sygambri. In 17/16 BC they crossed the Rhine and inflicted a severe defeat on the provincial governor, M. Lollius, who was forced to retreat with the loss of the Fifth Legion's eagle. At this Augustus took the field in person, and the Germans retired. This episode is alluded to both by Horace (*Odes* 4.14.51f., 4.2.34f.) and Propertius (4.6.77), the former writing between 16 and 13 BC, the latter not later than 16.

Augustus returned to Rome in 13 BC, and a year later the Sygambri became restive once more. This time their subjugation (along with that of several other German tribes) was undertaken by the Emperor's stepson Drusus, in 12–11 BC. The campaign, though risky, was successful, and Drusus earned an *ovatio*, or lesser triumph, for his part in it. A third campaign (the territory had never been properly pacified) was undertaken in 8/7 BC by Tiberius, Drusus having meanwhile died accidentally after falling from his horse while on reconnaissance near the Elbe (9 BC). The Sygambri were now quiet for a while.

The fact that both Horace and Propertius refer in flattering terms to the shaky settlement of 16 BC–perhaps in immediate anticipation of Augustus' return to Rome–makes it a virtual certainty that Ovid was doing the same, and that the traditional date for the original publication of the *Amores* can stand, without the addition of any known subsequent matter. Rome's shaky record on the German frontier needed all the public boosting it could get.

55–6 ‘This loss is by no means irreparable’–once again a whole poem's impact is virtually negated in its final couplet, which moves smoothly from a world of mildly hysterical mock-heroics to the everyday

commonplace that hair, when cut or destroyed, tends to grow out again—just as dawn comes up on time, whatever poets may say or hope.

1.15

In the first poem of Bk 1 Ovid was casting around for a literary theme, toyed conventionally with the idea of epic, but—impelled by Cupid—settled for erotic elegy instead. By now time has passed; the poetic mining of his affair with Corinna (whether real girl, literary lay-figure, or a fantasy-injected blend of the two) has brought him instant fame—and the unkind attention of sour moral critics. They call him, censoriously, idler and drone, a charge we have already seen him attempting to rebut in 1.9 (cf. esp. note to lines 41–2, p. 280). On the contrary, he protests: he *was* idle, he *was* lazy, but love put an end to all that: pursuing a girl is just as tough an option as military service. Yet by 1.13 he has tacitly reversed his position. For lovers sleep is the sweetest at dawn and after: why should *they* have to get up? There follows (lines 11–24) a list of workaday occupations which compel early rising, and from which Ovid (naturally, as a poet with a private income) by implication dissociates himself. Now, in 1.15 (lines 1–6), he admits that the burden of criticism against him has been that he follows none of the acceptable professions, that he is a mere dilettante. Such human ambitions, he retorts, are ephemeral (and courtroom work is mere literary prostitution). His own hope, his own objective is poetic immortality.

1–6 Ovid, the envious critic asserts, has chosen not to pursue the normal career open to a Roman citizen with his advantages: he is neither a soldier, a lawyer, nor a budding politician. He has abandoned the *cursus honorum*. Both he and his brother had been intended (clearly with Augustus' approval, if not at his instigation) for a senatorial career (*Trist.* 4.10.27–30). Ovid himself actually held some minor official posts, as we have seen (Introd., p. 29), but withdrew from public life before the age of twenty-five in order to practise poetry, remaining for the rest of his life a simple *eques*.

9–30 Ovid's candidates for the literary Hall of Fame have, on the whole, come through pretty well: his judgement compares excellently with that (say) of the Swedish Academy of Sciences in picking the past half-century's literary Nobel prizewinners. Oddly, he is better on Greek poets than Roman: Homer, Hesiod, Sophocles, Menander and Callimachus have indeed won immortality, (cf. AA 3.329ff. for another list, which drops several of the names listed here but adds Sappho, Ovid being at pains on that occasion to compile essential reading-matter for smart ladies.) Even Aratus survives: he lived from

about 315 to 240/39 BC, dividing his life between Athens and Macedonia, and his best-known work, entitled *Phaenomena*, was several times translated into Latin—e.g. by Varro of Atax, Cicero and Claudius’ brother Germanicus (though it is hard, today, to understand the ancient passion for versifying an indigestible *catalogue raisonné* on astronomy). In selecting Roman poets Ovid seems to have stuck to those already dead: hence the absence of Horace and Propertius. Virgil, Lucretius, Gallus and Tibullus were obvious candidates. Yet Lucretius hardly suited the Augustan mood of moral and religious reform, while Gallus was a decidedly risky choice. It may not be true that Virgil removed a panegyric of him from *Georgics* Bk 4 at Augustus’ instructions, but for Ovid to ignore the fact that official *damnatio memoriae* had made Gallus something of an ‘unperson’ (he refers to him by name at least seven times) was, to say the least, tactless.

Ennius and Accius (the latter an early tragedian born c. 170 BC) represent a nod to conservative tradition. But who today except scholars remembers Varro of Atax (b. 82 BC), the adaptor, or translator,

of Apollonius Rhodius’ *Argonautica* (hence the reference to Argo and the Golden Fleece)? The poem is lost, and we know nothing of its author’s life. About Gallus, on the other hand, we know a good deal. He seems to have shared with Catullus the original development, as a genre, of Roman love-elegy: not only Ovid himself (besides here at *Am.* 3.9.63–4, *AA* 3.334, *Trist.* 2.445–6, 4.10.53, 5.1.17) but also Propertius (2.34.91–2) and Quintilian (*Inst. Oral.* 10.1.93) mention him in this context. As we have seen, he was also a public careerist, who committed suicide (26, BC) as a result of some ambitious political indiscretion.

34 The Spanish river in question was the Tagus (modern Tajo, or Tejo, in Portugal), and the alluvial gold it washed down was proverbial in antiquity.

BOOK 2

2.1

Like 1.1 (which it in effect duplicates) this poem opens a new book with a programmatic statement of literary intentions. Ovid has—or says he has—been working at an epic, this time what sounds like a very pretentious Gigantomachy (*Tr.* 2.333–8). But during the process of composition his current mistress (presumably Corinna, though Ovid does not name her) stages a lock-out. The *exclusus amator* reacts promptly; his order of priorities is never in doubt. Abandoning the

epic, Ovid concentrates on producing a poem (perhaps this one) designed to break down her resistance. What point, he asks, in celebrating heroes, or warfare? Such things will not soften up a potential—or recalcitrant—mistress. Jupiter is unceremoniously relegated to creative limbo: his bolts are no match for the girl's, whereas elegy (as Ovid points out with a punning play on that ambiguous word *carmen*) has magical properties, can reverse the natural order of things—and break down doors. Erotic expertise, unlike spells and cantrips, will produce results, and is therefore worth acquiring; we see here an anticipation of the *Art of Love* as a practical guide. Better, in fact, private magic than public religion; State propaganda has nothing for the dedicated individualist.

How far Ovid's cavalier treatment of Jupiter had (as elsewhere, e.g. *Am.* 1.3.21–4, 1.10.1–8, 1.13.45–6) anti-Augustan overtones it is hard to tell; but the message in general terms is clear. The heroic mode has nothing to offer this poet, and he consciously rejects it. On the other hand, he argues, praise a beauty, and you are likely—as he knows from his own past experience—to enjoy her favours as well as winning literary fame. The attitude is solipsistic, utilitarian. Make love not war: love brings better fringe-benefits, and is, in any case, more congenial to Ovid than military propaganda. He also (never averse to killing two birds with one stone) makes this an opportunity to mock the conventional apologetic of Tibullus and Propertius. We recall the latter explaining to Maecenas why he can't, or won't, write patriotic epic (2.1, esp. 17–26): if he did so, he asserts, it would be no Gigantomachy but the contemporary wars of Maecenas himself and his patron Augustus. Propertius makes this the programme-piece of his own second book, and it is impossible to read Ovid's poem without recalling that of his predecessor. The political implication was there for those who cared to see it.

21–8 Elegy, Ovid argues, is not only his natural medium: within its own sphere it works more effectively than either epic or thunderbolts. The sphere, of course, is that of sexual persuasion. Playing on the multiple meaning of *carmen* ('poem' or 'magical incantation' or 'spell'), and driving his point home with repeated anaphora, he lists the uncanny powers of magical utterance. *Carmina* can 'call down' the moon, a curious skill attributed to witches in antiquity: they were supposed to cull some sort of foam or dew from it, and in general to control the various 'lunar influences' (tidal, menstrual, etc.).

29–32 All the examples chosen are from the *Iliad*. 'Old what's-his-name' is, of course, Odysseus. Atreus' sons were Agamemnon and Menelaus; Achilles, after killing Hector, slit the Trojan's ankles and dragged his body round the walls of Troy at his chariot-tail.

2.2 and 2.3

There has been some discussion as to whether these two pieces, clearly separate in the MSS., may not actually form the *disiecta membra* of a single poem. What we have here is a pair of related and juxtaposed poems—the technique is characteristic: cf. 1.11–1.12, 2.7–2.8, 2.13–2.14—in which the high speculative hopes of the first are dashed by the second's disappointment in the event. (1.11 and 1.12 form a particularly illuminating analogy.) The first constitutes a rhetorical exercise in persuasion, designed to 'soften up' the eunuch set as watchdog over a girl (not named) who has caught Ovid's fancy. The second reveals failure in this objective, accompanied by some understandable sneers at the eunuch's obduracy and unfortunate physical condition—so apt a symbol of Ovid's own inability (impotence, if you like) to gain his immediate ends. The girl's relationship with her *vir* is left technically ambiguous; but I see no reason to doubt that here, as in 1.4, whatever his later protestations, Ovid was describing the initial approaches in a prospective liaison with a freeborn married lady (see above, pp. 271–2). His exhortation to Bagoas can be compared with his own very similar appeal to the unfeeling janitor in 1.6; it forms part of the traditional literature generated by *servitium amoris*.

2.2

1 'Bagoas' is the name given to several Persian eunuchs by our historical sources, including one who was the minion, successively, of Darius III and Alexander the Great.

3–4 The cloister (or portico) described here was in the temple of Apollo on the Palatine, built by Augustus and formally opened on 9 October 28 BC. It contained between its giallo antico columns statues of the fifty daughters of Danaus, and opposite them their fifty cousins and suitors, the sons of Aegyptus. When forced into marriage, all the brides (with the single exception of Hypermnestra) killed their husbands on their wedding-night—an interesting association of ideas for this erotic elegy on the pursuit-and-rejection theme.

11–12 Once again Ovid uses the ambiguous term *vir* (= 'man' or 'husband') to describe his girl's protector; but the set-up surely implies a socially sanctioned marriage.

15–16 Freedom, *libertas*, has one meaning for Bagoas—that is, manumission—but quite different implications (i.e. sexual licence) for his mistress.

18–27 These lines (enclosed between double asterisks in my translation) are omitted by the oldest surviving MSS. The couplet 23–4

at least must be an intrusion. *Si faciet trade* ('If she's late coming back') is certainly very odd Latin, and the sense marks an unexpected break in an otherwise consistent rhetorical pattern. *Billets-doux*, mysterious stranger, sick girlfriend, visits to temple or theatre, all play some part in the lady's erotic activities—but all, equally, can sustain an innocent explanation. However sceptical Bagoas may be (so Ovid's argument runs), he will be well advised, in his own interests, to accept these excuses at their face value.

25–6 Isis, a Hellenized Egyptian goddess, was very popular in Rome. Octavian, the future Augustus, together with Mark Antony and Lepidus, had in 43 BC built a new temple for Isis and Sarapis, though later his attitude became less favourable to such foreign cults. This temple was located on the Campus Martius, north of the Circus Flaminius and east of the Baths of Agrippa. Ovid himself (AA 1.77–8, 3–393, 635–8), Propertius and, later, Juvenal all refer to it as a popular rendezvous for assignations and pick-ups.

44–6 Tantalus betrayed the confidences of Zeus to mortal men, and by way of punishment was placed in a well, so immobilized that he could reach neither the water itself nor the fruit-laden branches overhead, and thus suffered agonies of hunger and thirst. Hence our verb 'tantalize'. On Io cf. my note to *Am.* 1.3.21–4 (above, p. 271). When Hera learnt of her seduction by Zeus, Zeus turned her into a heifer. Since she had been a priestess of Hera, the goddess claimed authority over her, heifer or no, and set Argus the All-Seeing to guard her. Zeus ordered Hermes to steal Io away, which he could only do after killing Argus (Apollod. 2.1.3, cf. schol. Aesch. *Prom.* 561, Ovid *Am.* 3.4.20). It is significant that for Romans Io and Isis were identical: thus while spoilsport Argus died for his pains, Io-Isis survived (in Ovid's Augustan mind) to become the patroness of sexual adventure.

63–4 The verb *coimus* is used by Ovid in a double sense here: not only an assignation, but also the sexual intercourse which followed, is clearly implied. I have tried to reproduce this effect in my translation.

2.3

1–10 Bagoas' refusal is rewarded with a quick change of tone on Ovid's part, an insulting reminder of the eunuch's own defective sexual standing, neither male nor female: slave-boys were usually gelded before puberty—though exceptions were known. Ovid's use, in line 10, of his favourite military metaphor to describe Bagoas' 'harem duties'—emphatically here distinguished, and not as a compliment, from military service (fighting = the proper function of a whole and virile man)—casts an interesting side-light on the poet's concept, elsewhere, of *servitium amoris* as an acceptable alternative to the

2.4

9ff. So wide-ranging a spectrum of types and interests (some, on the face of it, mutually exclusive) suggests, once more, that what turns Ovid on is sex, with all else ancillary to this one overriding concern—except literary creativity, which both feeds and feeds off the erotic preoccupation. A man who finds so many different women attractive must be drawn, ultimately, by the common factor of their femininity rather than by the individual traits which distinguish them one from another. They may be different to begin with, but refracted through Ovid's gaze they are all alike: all serve the same purpose. Indeed, throughout the poem what Ovid repeatedly anticipates is getting the object of his affections into bed (see lines 14, 16, 22, 24, 33, 44–5): in fact or fantasy makes no difference. The psychology is consistent throughout. And why not? Ovid would ask. Why not, indeed? Nothing, I suspect, would depress him more, could he return from the shades, than to see the earnest literary hash posterity has made of his more casual impulses, the avalanche of solemn exegesis burying his lightest verse.

19 Callimachus (c. 305–c. 240 BC) was a North African Greek poet who emigrated young to Alexandria, and eventually found work in its great library. His literary quarrel with the epic poet Apollonius of Rhodes can be summed up in his remark that 'a big book is a big evil'; yet despite this he wrote prolifically (if not at length) himself. Of all the Hellenistic poets he proved by far the most popular in Roman times: only Homer is quoted more often, or survives in more papyrus fragments. Ovid imitated Callimachus' *Aetia* in the *Fasti*, and also copied the theme of his *Ibis*, besides owing him a generic literary debt for his elegiac expertise. Callimachus, in fact, is introduced here as the poet Ovid would regard it as the highest possible compliment to be told he outshone.

32 Hippolytus, Theseus' chaste and priggish son who dedicated himself to the cult of Artemis, the virgin huntress, and was tempted—unsuccessfully, but with tragic results—by his stepmother Phaedra, often served as a symbol of male virginity for Greek and Roman poets. Priapus, similarly, was an obvious symbol of urgent male desire.

44–5 'My sex-life runs the entire mythological gamut' (*omnibus historiis se meus aptat amor*) has been adduced as evidence to show that Ovid's concern with sex—except, presumably, for decorous marital encounters—was restricted to his art. The reader may safely be left to judge the value of such testimony—and of such hypotheses.

Ovid has been getting a taste of his own capricious medicine, and is egotist enough to be stung by a woman's infidelities. *His* peccadilloes, of course, are another matter: presumably here the familiar masculine double standard applies. The self-styled professor of seduction may play the field (he assumes) as he pleases, but when a woman starts cheating on *him* he wants to die and end it. Of course, half the fun lies in watching a repetition of *Am.* 1.4 with Ovid cast as *cocu* rather than gallant—yet invoking the same old-fashioned quasi-legal formula to protect his 'property'. He might, indeed, were this not against every tradition of Roman love-elegy, almost be speaking as an outraged husband.

As *fir*, however, he seems far less inhibited. At a first reading one gets the impression—with mounting incredulity—that he not only breaks up the girl's flirtation, but, to drive home his exclusive rights over her, proceeds to some fairly torrid embraces on his own account, there and then, *coram publico*. Such an interpretation is possible: it was, after all, late in the evening, many guests had left, and those remaining were drunk. But it makes the transition from apostrophe to narrative very strained. Ovid has been going on at Corinna (if it is Corinna) about her infidelities in general: one pictures them in bedroom or boudoir. Then he narrows his attack to one specific occasion: a dinner-party where she flirted, and more than flirted, with someone else. Before we know what has happened, the boudoir scene has been dropped, and Ovid is telling *the reader* what went on between the two of them—still, it would seem, at this ill-fated party. I would suggest that the switch from apostrophe occurs, not at line 33, but four lines earlier, with the narrator's break into *oratio recta*. 1–28 offers a self-contained scene between the lovers. The reader is assumed, but not addressed: Ovid has more immediately important matters on hand. But at line 29 he turns to the reader, as he so often does, in the way a good *raconteur* will address himself to his captive audience in a bar. Now the reader is being brought into the action. It is he who hears *a reported version* of Ovid's complaint to the girl—words that could well have been uttered, originally, in the privacy of their bedroom, as an appendix to the monologue which forms the first part of the poem. If we grant this, then the rest of the poem can be set there too, where it properly belongs, with its purely private emotions of violence and reconciliation. Ovid's problem here was, in fact, one with which all novelists are familiar: how to strike a balance between realism and convention, how to offer the reader-voyeur (and all readers of novels are voyeurs to some degree) an *entrée* on privacy while making the private relations themselves dramatic and immediate.

As becomes clear when we compare this poem with *Am.* 3.9, the lament for Tibullus, Ovid has here written a detailed parody of the *epicedion*, or commemorative dirge: it includes an introductory address to the mourners (1–16); a *lamentatio*, including the formal outburst against envious fate, the Greek *schetliasmós* (17–42); an account of the deceased parrot's end (43–8); a *consolatio* based on the afterlife (49–58); and, lastly, the funeral (59–62). The notion for honouring a pet with a funeral elegy had good precedents, which went back well beyond the most obvious source, Catullus 3, the hendecasyllables commemorating Lesbia's sparrow.

7–10 King Pandion of Athens had two daughters, Procne and Philomela. According to the Greek version of the myth, Procne was married to Tereus, King of Thrace, who then contracted a violent passion for her sister Philomela, and seduced her, cutting out her tongue to prevent her revealing what had happened. But by weaving characters in a robe she revealed her sorrows to Procne. The two sisters thereupon contrived one of those cannibal revenges in which Greek myth abounds, serving up Tereus' son Itylus, or Itys, to him for dinner. Having done this, they fled, and Tereus, on discovering what they had done, followed after with an axe, bent on revenge. However, the gods turned all three of them into birds: Procne became the nightingale, mourning for Itylus, Philomela the chattering (? presumed tongueless) swallow, and Tereus a hoopoe. Roman tradition, however, as here, reversed the sisters' roles, making Procne the swallow and Philomela the nightingale. It was this botched version that survived into the Renaissance, when 'Philomel[a]' became a synonymous term for 'nightingale', cf. Ovid *Met.* 6.426–674.

34–6 The jackdaw or crow (*graculus*: one American variant is still known as a grackle) and the raven were regarded as weatherwise birds in antiquity, with the gift of predicting rain. The hatred of Minerva (or rather of her Greek analogue Pallas Athena) for the raven had an odd origin. The raven reported to her the disobedience of one or more of her daughters, and their subsequent suicide: Athena turned the raven from white to black, and nursed an undying grudge against it for having been the bearer of bad news.

39–42 The best die young: it has been a favourite belief from Homer's day (see, e.g., *Iliad* 21.34ff.) to that of the survivors from the First World War. Catullus expressed the same sentiment in his lament for Lesbia's sparrow (3.13), and this may be the passage that Ovid had immediately in mind. Protesilaus, a Thessalian prince, was the first Greek to be slain at Troy; Thersites, ugliest and most cross-grained of the Greeks in this campaign, survived him—but hardly to a ripe old

age: he fell victim to Achilles, who killed him for jeering at the grief he, Achilles, showed after slaying the Amazon Penthesilea. Hector's death preceded the fall of Troy, and thus left most, if not all, of his brothers still alive.

48 At last Corinna is named, and we see what this elegant little pastiche is doing in a collection of erotic poems. Here the link with Catullus' *passer, deliciae meae puellae* is closest. The parrot was a lover's gift and the affection between the bird and Corinna is made clear; furthermore, at line 56 Ovid reminds us of the amorous propensities so often attributed to birds themselves.

53–4 The literature on the phoenix, that fabulous bird reputed to live for 500 years and achieve rebirth from its own ashes, is considerable: see esp. Herodotus 2.73, Ovid *Met.* 15.392ff.

2.7 and 2.8

These two poems—like 1.11 and 1.12 a dramatic diptych—are commonly taken as one more demonstration that Ovid in the *Amores* was creating purely fictional situations, exercising his literary talents rather than drawing on experience. But the situation is a perfectly possible one, and Ovid's reactions entirely in character.

It is true that his treatment of the incident shows both rhetorical and literary skill; but does that mean he necessarily invented it? By addressing first Corinna, then Cypassis, Ovid can display his skill at eristics, i.e. arguing opposite viewpoints one after the other, with some aplomb: see esp. 7.19–22, answered by 8.9–14.

2.7

3–6 Women occupied the upper tiers of the auditorium in the theatre: cf. Prop. 4.8.77. The theatre referred to here is that of Pompey, built 55 BC in stone (*marmorei*); previous theatres had been temporary wooden structures. Despite this segregation of the sexes it is clear that the Roman theatre—like Sunday church services during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries—offered a convenient venue for discreet flirtation: see AA 1.89–134 *passim* (cf. 3.394, 633; RA 751–2).

17 *Ecce, novum crimen!* Ovid exclaims: *crimen* is charmingly ambiguous, since it can mean either 'accusation' or 'crime', and thus provides the equivalent of a covert wink to the knowing reader.

2.8

1–2 On the lady's-maid as coiffeuse see above, note to *Am.* 1.11.1–4 (pp. 282–3), and the highly informative section on 'Coiffure' in J. P. V. D. Balsdon's *Roman Women*, pp. 255–60, and pl. 13, opp. p. 240. cf.

3–4 ‘No country beginner’, *non rustica*, with its strong hint of sophistication in matters both social and sexual, is one of Ovid’s highest compliments to a woman. For his scornful attitude to *rusticitas*, or naïve provincial respectability, see, e.g., *Am.* 1.8.44, 2.4.13, 3.1.43, 3.4.37, 3.10.18; AA 1.607,672; RA 329, 330; *EP* 1.77, 4.102, 15.287, 16.13.

10ff. The parade of mythological precedents for falling in love with a maid (or captive, or some other person outside one’s social station) had already been deployed by Horace, *Odes* 2.4.1ff., who also cites, in addition to Achilles/Briseis and Agamemnon/Cassandra, the similar case of Ajax and Tecmessa. See above, *Am.* 1.9.33–44. It is noteworthy that all Ovid’s parallels are drawn from cases of women captured in war (as indeed were Horace’s); thus with a neat literary echo he reinforces his already close links between the concepts of sexual and military operations: see my introductory note on 1.9 (p. 279).

19–20 For the gods’ readiness not to take lovers’ oaths seriously, see above, note on *Am.* 1.8.85–6: the belief was widespread and of great antiquity.

22–8 It is not necessary to assume that Cypassis is a coloured girl. At *Am.* 2.4.40 *fusco colore* need mean no more than ‘dark’ or even ‘brunette’ in contrast to the blonde, *flava puella*, of line 39, and the same may well be true here.

Ovid’s arguments to Cypassis, of course, contain a built-in fallacy. If she refuses to sleep with him, he threatens, he will tell Corinna the whole story of their *affaire*. But this, obviously, would be disastrous for his own relationship with Corinna. The joke, of course, is that Cypassis could well be flustered enough to swallow Ovid’s argument, illogicality and all, whereas we, reading the poem at our leisure, do not—surely a deliberate effect?

2.9, 9B

Once again the pros and cons of erotic scalp-hunting are debated, and Ovid uses the occasion to display, as in 2.7 and 8, his eristic skill in putting the *argumentatio* for each side. The poems are notable for several things: their density and concision, their striking imagery, their renewal of a favourite Ovidian motif—sex justified in military terms—and the sharply edged, psychologically acute self-portrait they present: compulsive desire mingled with boredom and self-disgust (9.9–10, 23–4, 9B. 3–10; cf. 1.2.1–12, 2.4 *passim*, 2.10 *passim*, 3.7 *passim*, 3.11B. 1–2).

The imagery is hard, sharp, deliberately unromantic: barbed arrows, spears, the gladiator's wooden sword, the runaway horse's bit, the veering yawl, fighting, hunting. But then for Ovid sex *is* (in at least two senses) venery; and for the hunter, as he reminds us here (cf. also *Am.* 2.19.31–16), pursuit is all, while 'girls are such exquisite hell'.

The first half of the diptych, then, calls for a truce in the sex-game, a discharge from service, while the second decides that, after all, life without sex would be as boring as death.

2.9

7–8 During the first, abortive, expedition of the Greek armada to recover Helen, the fleet put in to shore on the Mysian coast, mistaking it for the Troad. The king of Mysia, Telephus, was wounded by Achilles' spear, and afterwards told by an oracle that only the man who wounded him could heal him. He made his way to Argos, and Achilles cured his wound by scraping rust from his spear into it, a clear case of sympathetic magic.

13–14 Ovid at several points in the *Amores* (e.g. 1.6.3–6 and 2.10.23–4, besides the present passage) describes himself as extremely thin, but wiry: he attributes his lack of weight to sexual exercise, and hints that, far from hampering his performance, it actually enhances it—an assertion with which doctors and dieticians would probably not quarrel.

15–24 The idea of a triumph is, once again (cf. 1.2.23ff.) brought in to juxtapose the achievements of love and of Roman imperialism. The veteran's 'State allotment' indicates a period prior to AD 6, when Augustus regularized conditions of discharge for legionaries: ever since the days of Sulla it had been a common practice to settle demobilized troops in new *coloniae*, giving each man a grant of land. A discharged gladiator who had served his time was presented with a wooden sword (*rude donatus*) in token of release from combat.

2.9 B

15–18 Similar sentiments are expressed below (*Am.* 2.10.15), as well as by Tibullus (1.2.75) and Propertius (1.14.15–16).

19–20 These were not the only circumstances in which Ovid welcomed what we might call 'white lies', or discreet silence, from his mistress. See, e.g., *Am.* 1.4.69–70, where he prefers not to be told if she has had intercourse with her husband, but begs for a blanket denial, and *Am.* 3.14 *passim*, where he makes much the same plea apropos her numerous affairs on the side.

23 The inconstancy of Mars (Ares) here referred to is, of course, the famous occasion in Homer (*Od.* 8.262–339) when he and Aphrodite cuckolded the absent Hephaestus, only to be trapped in bed together by the latter’s web-like toils—at which sight, not surprisingly, ‘laughter unquenchable arose among the deathless gods’.

2.10

As an erotic apologia this cocky poem displays its own innocent charm. Ovid’s mood shifts amusingly from the initial irritation with Graecinus to a mood of self-satisfied sexual bravado. How boring, he laments at first, to be stuck between two girls: what a business choosing one or the other! Still, he reflects, better too much sex than none at all—so why not, at a pinch, take them *both* on? After some complacent reflections on his own erotic stamina—as usual, Ovid’s notion of ‘taking on’ a girl looks no further than intercourse—he concludes with the rake’s pious prayer down the ages, that he may die while making love.

1 This Graecinus (see Introduction, pp. 36–7) is certainly the addressee of three of the *Black Sea Letters* (1.6, 2.6, 4.9), and in all likelihood C. Pomponius Graecinus, the *consul suffectus* of AD 16.

2.11

This is what was known in antiquity as a *propemptikon*, i.e. a poem addressed to some individual about to make a journey (most often by sea, where the risks were proportionately greater), wishing him or her a safe landfall and a speedy return. The tradition was a long-standing one: not surprisingly, when one reflects on the hazards of Aegean travel (‘When you round Cape Malea,’ an old proverb ran, ‘say goodbye to home.’)

All the traditional ingredients of the genre are present: Ovid begins by trying (*schetliasmós*) to dissuade Corinna from making the journey at all (1–32), then wishes her *bon voyage* in two brief lines (33–4), and spends the rest of the poem (35–56) fantasizing about her return. On the surface all is indeed simple delight as Ovid visualizes this latter scene: a magically swift reunion, the innocent, and somewhat un-Ovidian, idea of a beach-picnic, Corinna encouraged, over the wine, to tell her own travellers’ tall stories. Yet for those who know—as Ovid’s readers most certainly did—their Propertius and Tibullus, an uneasy leitmotiv runs through these final lines. The veiled quotations hint, ominously, at sickness and death: it is as though Ovid were employing them as touchstones for mortality.

1–6 These first six lines contain a cluster of literary allusions that

would do credit to *The Waste Land*. The Argo was built, with Thessalian pinewood, from trees felled on Mt Pelion. Corinna, it is made clear, will be exposed in Ovid's mind to all the traditional mythic perils of a sea-voyage: he at once exaggerates and mocks the actual risks with a proem in the high tragic manner. Perhaps by such inflated parallels he hoped to comfort Corinna, if he could not dissuade her, and in so doing to comfort himself as well: 'These fragments have I shored against my ruins.' If Corinna is deserting him (see below) the allusions become even more pointed.

7–8 What Corinna abandons has an ambiguity in Latin that English cannot match: *notumque torum sociosque Penates*. To whom is the bed familiar, and whose joint property are the household gods? My translation catches some, but alas not all, of this suggestive uncertainty. That infidelity and desertion are implied seems certain: note, though, that Ovid carefully omits not only her destination, but also any motive for leaving on Corinna's part.

18–20 The 'African quicksands' mentioned here were the Greater and Lesser Syrtes, two large gulfs in the Libyan Sea between Cyrenaica, Tripolitania and Tunisia, regarded as particularly dangerous for navigation on account of their shallows, sunken reefs and treacherous sanddrifts. They are today the Gulfs of Sidra and Gabès respectively.

29–32 The 'patron gods of sailors' in this context were Leda's offspring, the twin Dioscuri Castor and Pollux (or Polydeuces in Greek), often referred to by Roman poets.

44 What Ovid says the ship has aboard, in Latin, is *nostros deos*, or 'our gods', at one level the images of the ship's tutelary deities, most often affixed to the vessel's poop or stern. But by poetic licence the plural can be taken as a singular: 'my god', or, in a less specific sense, 'my deity'. Ovid's 'deity', of course, is Corinna herself. I could not find an adequate English equivalent for this associative ambiguity, so came down, with regret, exclusively on Corinna's side of the fence.

2.12

Like Propertius on a similar occasion (2.14), Ovid here celebrates the yielding of his mistress, a night spent triumphantly in her arms. Yet the two poems, despite superficial similarities, are fundamentally distinct. Propertius, full of bitter-sweet joy, senses that the moment will not last. He is involved with Cynthia as a person, and though, like Ovid, he employs the image of a triumph (vv. 23–8), it is for a very different purpose. The spoils of victory which he describes, the captive kings and chariots, the rich offerings to be placed in Venus' shrine, are a metaphor for the night of love he and Cynthia shared: Propertius, in

gratitude, is consecrating their common pleasure. Ovid, on the other hand, regards the entire exercise as a military siege-operation, and has congratulations for no one involved but himself. Both poets adduce the mythological parallel of Agamemnon (Prop. vv. 1–2, Ovid vv. 9–10), but while Propertius simply claims greater happiness than the Greek commander at the fall of Troy, Ovid's point is that unlike Agamemnon (who had to share his victory with others), Ovid has scored a one-man triumph: captain, infantry, cavalry and standard-bearer all rolled into one.

7–8 The emphasis on triumphing over a girl gains added political significance when we recall how official propaganda played down Antony's role in the Actium campaign, and emphasized that of Cleopatra.

17–24 Various examples of *cherchez la femme* as the cause of a war: Helen, Hippodameia, Lavinia, the Rape of the Sabines. For the battle of Centaurs and Lapiths at the wedding-feast of Pirithoüs and Hippodameia see *Met.* 12.210–535. Lavinia was the daughter of Latinus and Amata, and originally betrothed to the Rutulian prince Turnus. When Aeneas landed, Latinus remembered an oracle advising him to marry his daughter to a foreign chieftain, and gave Lavinia to the newcomer instead. The result was a war with the Rutulians, in which Turnus was finally killed by Aeneas. The latter married Lavinia, who bore him Ascanius: the town of Lavinium was named after her. On the rape of the Sabine women see *AA* 1.101–34 and note ad loc.

2.13, 2.14

That abortion was common in Rome, particularly among the upper classes, is clear enough not only from literary passages denouncing the practice, or alluding to women's unwillingness to bear children (cf. Juvenal *Sat.* 6.592ff., Ovid *Nux* 24), but perhaps even more from Augustan legislation which penalized the childless while offering bonuses for large families. The *Lex Julia de maritandis ordinibus* of 18 BC and the *Lex Papia Poppaea* of AD 9 both exemplify this trend, and hint eloquently at the state of affairs that Augustus was attempting to remedy. The seniority of the consuls was established by the number of their children, and in the case of a political tied vote the candidate with the larger family was held to have won. It is thus clear that Corinna's act, far from being isolated or extraordinary, was (as 2.14 makes clear) a commonplace occurrence. This does not detract from its dramatic impact, or lessen the shock (and, one fears, the irritation) which Ovid displays.

The first poem is largely taken up with formal prayers to Isis and to Ilithyia, goddess of childbirth: invocation, enumeration of past

services, promises of future offerings. However, these prayers are sandwiched between a brief statement of the facts, followed by a somewhat vague admission of paternity (1–6), and a final couplet addressed to Corinna herself (27–8) which suggests, suddenly, that we are to envisage the entire scene, prayers included, as taking place at Corinna's bedside. Once again, Ovid has so loaded his coda as to make us rethink all that preceded it.

2.14, on the other hand, consists—down to the last four lines—of a long general jeremiad against abortion as a practice, backed with numerous mythological (plus two agricultural) *exempla*, and culminating in the reminder, delivered with relish, that women who try to kill their unborn foetus very often end up killing themselves. If we are to regard this as a dramatic continuation of the episode, it seems clear that the narrator has by now recovered both his self-righteousness and his fluent command of literary parallels. The final quatrain, however (41–4), finds him asking the gods to blow away such ill-omened words, and to overlook Corinna's offence—this once: next time there will be no mercy. Corinna, it would seem, is expected, if the situation recurs, to grin and bear it without complaint (it is typical of Ovid that he leaves us guessing as to whether the abortion was in fact successful or not).

2.14

5ff. What in fact are Ovid's objections to the practice of abortion? Not, we may safely say, moral. If allowed to spread, it could cause the extinction of the human race. If practised by the wrong (i.e. top) people, various VIPs (Achilles, Romulus, Aeneas, Caesar) would not have appeared at moments in history when their services were badly needed. He also applies an agricultural analogy, citing vine and orchard tree for the principle of letting all fruit, and thus each foetus, mature in season (a nod to the Virgil of the *Georgics*?). Revenge on a husband is regarded as a mitigating excuse; the danger of the process to the mother is also considered. What surprises about this is that, for once, Ovid would seem to have embraced the official line. Could he, yet again, be mocking Augustan moral legislation by applying it in a demeaning or subtly ridiculous context—in this case, a lover's obligations towards his mistress?

Contraception, which one might have thought a key topic for any practitioner or *praeceptor amoris*, is ignored both here and throughout the *Ars*. Did Ovid always expect the gentleman to enjoy his fun, while the lady ripened in season? Not if we accept his protestation (*Trist.* 2.351–2) that no husband, *even a lower-class one*, has been saddled with illegitimate offspring as a result of his, Ovid's, sexual adventures.

Another possibility: perhaps Ovid's man-of-the-world pose held up well enough under favourable, i.e. non-demanding, conditions, but the moment something went wrong, or real life intruded on the pose, he was liable to take refuge in an outburst of furious respectability? Or could it be, simply, that here, if nowhere else, his chauvinist attitude happened to coincide with Augustus' moral programme? Unlikely: what Don Juan wants a pregnant love-object? My own, unprovable, suspicion is linked to Ovid's apparent low fertility. We know that this was a common phenomenon in the late Republic and early Empire. This one incident apart, it may well be that Ovid had hitherto been able to ignore the problem altogether, because it never bore any consequences for him. This would explain, *inter alia*, his curious, but significant, uncertainty (2.13.5–6) as to whether he was, in fact, the father of Corinna's unborn child.

11ff. The 'stone-throwing demiurge' was Deucalion, who, with Pyrrha, repopled the world after a flood by flinging stones over his shoulder. Thetis the sea-nymph bore Achilles to Peleus; Ilia, or Rhea Silvia, was the mother of Romulus and Remus. Augustus, adopted by his great-uncle Julius Caesar, claimed descent from Venus through Aeneas, her son by Anchises: Aeneas' son Iulus was the eponymous ancestor of the *gens Julia*. Medea killed her children because their father Jason had divorced her in Corinth to marry Creon's daughter. For the complex myth of Tereus, Procne, Itys and Philomela, see above, note to *Am.* 2.6.7–10 (p. 295).

2.15

The erotic conceit of a lover who identifies himself with some article in his beloved's possession—especially something that she would wear or carry on her person—dates back at least as far as the Hellenistic period (see, e.g., *Anth. Pal.* 5.83,84; 12.208), was popular in the Middle Ages, and has seen regular service ever since (e.g. in Tennyson's 'The Miller's Daughter'). It offers splendid scope for various sorts of sexual innuendo: cf. the pseudo-Ovidian *De Pulice*, the ancestor of several similar works, including John Donne's 'The Flea' and a modern calypso known variously as 'Muriel's Treasure' or 'The Bedbug'. Jewellery, a papyrus-roll, a soft breeze, a rose: opportunities are endless. In Ovid's case we also have a double entendre to consider, since the Latin word *anulus*, just as the English word 'ring', can also be used as a synonym for the anus. As so often, Ovid takes a hackneyed literary convention and exploits it *ad absurdum*. We are suddenly faced (lines 25–6) with the mental image of a ring in a shower-bath developing an erection: nothing could more neatly expose the artificiality of this stylized exercise in wishful thinking. To become

one's own gift would indeed confer proximity—but *awareness*? The minute we start visualizing a sentient observer somehow concealed, or immanent, in ring, rose, book or what-have-you, the entire conceit collapses into a species of grotesque *adynaton*. After working this deft literary deflation, Ovid winds up with a couplet as commonplace as a Chinese fortune-cookie motto. The ring, having shown off its symbolic paces, reverts to the simple lover's gift of lines 1–6: a nice case, in fact, of ring-composition.

2.16

Ovid's exclusive concentration, throughout the *Amores*, on his main erotic theme can, at times, become a little irritating to the reader, and the description of rural scenery with which this poem opens is a welcome relief. Even so, we have to make the most of very little. Ten lines—and then the ever-interesting topic, by which all else is judged, relentlessly recurs: *at meus ignis abest*, 'but my flame isn't here'. Apart from four more lines (33–6), which again emphasize how dreary the scene is without the presence of his beloved, Ovid wastes no more time on his birthplace for its own sake, and only refers to it perfunctorily elsewhere (*Am.* 3.15.11–14, *Fast.* 4.685–6, *Trist.* 4.10.2–4). It was not that he had no eye for the countryside: several poems exist to disprove such a notion. But he was not, in the last resort, by temperament or life-style, much addicted to the natural habitat of that quality which he can never mention without a sneer—*rusticitas*.

Sulmo, the modern Sulmona, lies in a fertile valley among the wild mountains of the Abruzzi. Its landscape is startling, a pattern of stark contrasts. Ovid, however, only mentions the hills and passes to express a hope that their steep winding roads will become level for his beloved. He compliments the tough Pelignian peasants who fought for independence during the Social War (90–88 BC), but never refers to their living descendants. Highet (p. 196) sums up his urban attitude acutely: 'He liked Sulmo with its surroundings because it was fruitful and well-watered—in fact, a tidy farm, a large garden. As for the inhabitants, he does not seem ever to have noticed them.' Why, on his own terms, should he? To him they were as remote—and brutishly inferior—as the *contadini* of the Abruzzi still remain to any town-dwelling Italian. Ovid proudly acknowledges his Pelignian roots, but has no urge to identify with them: like every small-town boy who has made a successful transfer to the big city, he can only go back for long weekends.

17 The journey to Sulmo must, in fact, have been both difficult and dangerous in Ovid's day. Quite apart from the constant hazard of highwaymen and footpads, the road (then as now) ran through passes

which negotiate some of the highest mountains in central Italy, to descend precipitously into the plain below. The forests of the Abruzzi still abound with wild boar, bears and wolves. Ovid's extravagant wish for his girl in the last two lines of the poem is thus no mere literary convention, but based on an all-too-real knowledge of the route she would have to travel.

23–6 Scylla and Charybdis were traditionally located in the Straits of Messina. Scylla's dogs, barking from her womb or groin, were a favourite motif among Roman poets. Cape Malea (the modern Matapan), at the southernmost tip of Laconia, was notoriously dangerous for sailors: cf. introd. note to 2.11, above.

31–2 Hero was a priestess of Aphrodite in Sestos; her lover Leander would swim across the Hellespont from Abydos after dark to visit her, till one stormy night he was drowned.

39–40 The names and places are chosen for their remoteness as well as their barbarian associations. Prometheus' rock in the Caucasus was especially regarded, at least metaphorically, as the 'end of the world'.

41 Italian farmers grafted vines on to elms and used the term 'marry' of the process (*maritare*). This gave rise to a pleasant fantasy about the natural love between them.

2.17

It is probably no accident that whereas in 2.16 Ovid is yearning for Corinna's arrival, his heart made fonder by her protracted absence, both 2.17 and 2.18 emphasize aspects of her character which severely try his patience when she is with him. She puts on airs and treats her cavalier like dirt. Worse, she interrupts his writing and tries to veto any mode of composition, e.g. tragedy, which does not directly refer to her. By 2.19 Ovid (whether in fact or fiction or both) has put two and two together, and is taking the lady's husband to task for not keeping her under stricter surveillance. Too much of her company clearly has its disadvantages—which may go some way to explain why Ovid's appetite, on his own account, is most whetted by frustration and elusiveness. Pursuit, as always, excites him more than possession.

The poem is a neat but at first sight unremarkable exercise: it has interested few commentators. Perhaps its most noteworthy feature is the tantalizing biographical hints it offers us about Corinna. The series of mythological parallels suggests clearly that she not only played the spoilt beauty with Ovid but in some way claimed to be his *social superior*. Ovid promises he will not be a *crimen*, that is an 'accusation', a cause of scandal—or boredom—to her. Their love-affair 'won't ever require disowning'. Ovid agrees to take Corinna on her own terms

(line 23). Finally, there is the woman who falsely pretends to be Corinna. In lines 31–2 Ovid, through the image of the two rivers, challenges her assertion. Why the Eurotas and the Po? Surely not just because of the distance between them: the simple answer is because one lady was Greek, the other Italian. Nor, if Corinna put on social airs with Ovid, need we doubt which was which. We shall never, in all likelihood, know Corinna's identity (and many will continue to argue that she was a figment of Ovid's imagination); but this poem, taken in conjunction with our other evidence, suggests strongly that she was a Roman lady of high rank.

3–4 The goddess of Paphos (on Cyprus) and Cythera was, of course, Venus (Aphrodite), who had cults in both places.

15–20 For Calypso and her relations with Odysseus see Homer *Od.* 5 *passim*. The sea-nymph who wed Peleus was Thetis. For Numa and Egeria see Ovid *Fast.* 3.261ff., *Met.* 15.482ff. For Vulcan (Hephaestus) and Venus (Aphrodite) cf. *AA* 2.567–70.

21–2 Ovid compares the short pentameter with Vulcan's lame foot: cf. above, *Am.* 1.1.3ff., 27–8.

32 The Po (Northern Italy) and the Eurotas (Laconia) were, and remain, the two most considerable rivers of Italy and peninsular Greece respectively.

2.18

1–3 The poem's theme suggests that it originally featured as the *envoi* to one of Ovid's five original books, but was displaced on revision. 1.1, 1.15, 2.1, 3.1 and 3.15 all deal with the same topic, Ovid's perennial weakness for being sidetracked by Eros from more weighty themes: only 3.15, as is appropriate, takes a final farewell of love-elegy. The opening lines echo Prop. 1.7.1–5; but whereas Ovid claims to be at least *trying* to write tragedy rather than erotic verse, Propertius proudly nails his colours to the mast (9–10): '*This* is the way my life is spent, *this* is my claim to renown, on *this* I want my poetry's spreading reputation to depend.' The reader of Ovid was surely expected to recall those lines. Macer (cf. *Introd.* pp. 26ff.) was a close friend of Ovid's, with whom as a youth he had travelled in Asia Minor (*EP* 2.10.21ff.); he was also related to Ovid's third wife (*ibid.*, 10). Elsewhere, (*EP* 4.16.6) he is referred to as *Iliacus Macer*, 'Macer of Troy', a title explained by his activities as an epic poet. What he was composing seems to have been a prelude to the *Iliad*, an account of those events that preceded, and led up to, the Wrath of Achilles.

13 The tragic opus in question (see above) was almost certainly Ovid's lost *Medea*, rated by Tacitus (*Dial.* 12) among the greatest Roman

tragedies, and of which Quintilian (*Inst. Oral.* 10.1.98) wrote that it just showed what Ovid could do when he chose to discipline his creative talent rather than indulge it.

21–6 Eight of the first fifteen ‘Heroines’ Epistles’ are mentioned here: nos. 1 (Penelope to Ulysses), 2 (Phyllis to Demophoön), 5 (Oenone to Paris), 11 (Canace to Macareus), 6 (Hypsipyle to Jason), 10 (Ariadne to Theseus), 4 (Phaedra to Hippolytus), 7 (Dido to Aeneas) and 15 (Sappho to Phaon). Demophoön was a son of Theseus who, on his return to Troy, became betrothed to Phyllis, daughter of King Sithon of Thrace. When Demophoön went off to Cyprus, however, the girl committed suicide, believing he would never return, and was turned into an almond-tree. Ovid refers to the story again in *Her.* 2 *passim*, AA 2.353–4, 3.37–8, 459–60, and RA 55–6, 591–608 (see my note, pp. 417–18). Oenone was the nymph from Mt Ida (daughter of a river-god, Cebren) who married Paris and was deserted by him for Helen. The incestuous passion of Macareus and Canace, both children of Aeolus the wind-god, formed the theme of Euripides’ lost *Aeolus*. When the Argonauts put in to Lemnos (a peculiarly dreary island) they found it ruled by women, who had murdered their husbands and fathers, under a queen, Hypsipyle. Jason sired two children on Hypsipyle, but afterwards deserted her. The accounts of Ariadne’s parting from Theseus vary, but Ovid follows the version in which Theseus deserted her, either on Dia or on Naxos. Theseus (lines 24–5) was, by the Amazon Antiope, the father of Hippolytus, and the guilty passion of his wife Phaedra for her stepson was widely treated by ancient authors. Ovid also treats this theme in *Met.* 15.497ff., AA 1.511–12, and RA 64. Dido’s suicide is described at length by Virgil in *Am.* 4.641ff. Ovid picks up the tradition of Sappho’s unhappy heterosexual love-affair with Phaon the ferryman, and her suicidal leap, after he deserted her and went to Sicily, from the high cliffs of Leucas.

27–34 Sabinus was a close friend of Ovid’s, a poet himself, who died young (*EP* 4.16.13–16). The fact that he composed replies to these epistles says little for his literary taste. Only the answer from Ulysses could have failed to ruin the effect of its counterpart. The order in which both originals and replies are mentioned here suggests that *Heroides* 1–15 already existed much as we have them today.

38 Laodameia was the wife of Protesilaus, the first Greek ashore at Troy, and the first to be killed there. She continued to pine for him after his death, even going so far that she ‘made an image of him and consorted with it’. Hermes, taking pity on her, brought Protesilaus briefly up from Hades, and Laodameia either expired in his ghostly arms, or else stabbed herself when he was taken back to the

2.19

This poem is often compared and contrasted with *Am.* 3.4 as an example of how you can never take what Ovid says seriously, how the changing literary *persona* is all. Here, he tells a cuckolded husband to put a stricter guard on his wife, since otherwise he, Ovid, will become bored with her through lack of opposition. There, he informs the same long-suffering gentleman that shutting his wife up is useless, since nothing but natural inclination can produce chastity. When the two poems are juxtaposed, many of the apparent inconsistencies melt away (see my introductory note on 3.4, pp. 315–16), and both propositions are equally valid, from Ovid's viewpoint, in different circumstances. The characteristically masculine notion of rejecting too easy a conquest has a long history. Ovid himself repeats the motif elsewhere, e.g. *Am.* 2.9.9–10, *AA* 3.577–610. On the face of it, though, he is equally resentful of too spirited or stubborn a resistance: *Am.* 1.6, 2.2, 2.3. What suits him best, in fact, is a *show* of elusiveness, a doorkeeper who merely plays tough, caprice that understands the unwritten rules of the game. His real objection, whether to an over-indifferent or a vulgarly restrictive husband, is that such persons spoil the fun by refusing to take on the roles conceived for them. How can the formal quadrille of civilized seduction survive without their essential cooperation? Ovid is *homo ludens* in person: we do his character less than justice if we reduce its varied literary manifestations to a mere bundle of masks.

19–20 We should note that whoever this girl may be, she is *not* Corinna, with whom in fact Ovid compares her.

21–2 For the theme of the lover-shut-out (*exclusus amator*) and the *paraclausithyron*, the poem written to celebrate such an occasion, see *Am.* 1.6 *passim*, and my introductory note ad loc. (pp. 274–5).

27–8 Danaë was the daughter of Acrisius, king of Argos. An oracle declared that a child born of her would one day kill Acrisius, who therefore kept her shut up in a subterranean chamber, or tower, of bronze. However, Zeus reached her by transforming himself into a shower of gold, and got her pregnant with Perseus. Mother and child were sent floating out to sea in a chest by Acrisius, but reached Seriphos safely: the oracle, in due course, was fulfilled.

29–30 On Io's vicissitudes as a heifer see *Am.* 2.2.44–6 and my note ad loc. (p. 292).

3.1

Once again Ovid begins a book with a programmatic poem about his stubborn resistance to the Claims of the Sublime. The allegory is of the lightest. It is possible that the wood may represent the Roman poet or orator's *silva rerum*, that mass of raw material on which he could draw at will. Ovid's predicament much resembles the famous allegorical myth of Prodicus, 'Heracles at the Crossroads' (see Xenophon *Mem.* 2.1.21–34), in which the young hero is similarly confronted with two allegorical yet palpably real ladies, Virtue and Vice, competing for his allegiance. However seriously Ovid took his *Medea*, he simply cannot resist guying Tragedy: 'scarlet buskins/holding her upright against the weight of her hair'. Elegy, on the other hand, cheerfully describes her vicissitudes as a written love-poem, nailed to doors, stuffed in bosoms, or torn up and thrown down the drain (53–9): this incongruous motif recalls Ovid's ring-metamorphosis in *Am.* 2.15 (see my introductory note ad loc., p. 304). We are never in doubt as to which of them, at this point, Ovid will choose—no Bk 3 otherwise—but the plea for postponement is clinched, in wily mocking self-knowledge, by the prospect of immortalization for his love-affairs. Nearly two millennia later we can relish the irony of that capricious fate which preserved the *Amores*, but condemned the *Medea* to oblivion.

1–4 The description of wood and grotto is deliberately stylized, almost like a Pompeian wall-painting.

9–10 Elegy is symbolically lame to represent the fact that the second line of an elegiac couplet is shorter than the first—and to emphasize the contrast with tragic senarii and epic hexameters.

34–5 Myrtle (cf. *Am.* 1.1.29) was sacred to Venus, and thus an appropriate appurtenance for the allegorical figure of (erotic) Elegy.

3.2

All critics are agreed that this is a delightful and vivid poem, almost unique in ancient literature (perhaps the nearest approach to it, for intimate social realism, is Theocritus' Fifteenth Idyll, the *Adoniazusae*), a monologue addressed to a girl at the races, which not only displays great psychological acumen but offers us an all-too-rare glimpse of Romans enjoying their leisure in a credible and recognizable manner. The scene is as clearly etched as Frith's *Derby Day*. What would seem to have struck nobody, however (and this remains true whether we treat the poem as fiction or as reportage), is the curious ambiguity of the relationship between Ovid and the object of his advances; the girl

utters not one word from start to finish. Why not? And how have they come to be where they are in the first place?

It makes a crucial difference how we read the scene. There are the girl and Ovid next to one another in the front row, against the railings (63–4). She has (it would appear from Ovid's complaints) one strange man to her right, and another behind her (20–24), leaving Ovid himself on her left. Thus she must, inevitably it would seem, be either alone, or else Ovid's acknowledged guest. Which is it? If she had come alone—unlikely in any circumstances—she would have, almost by definition, to be a *meretrix*, a prostitute. Who else would haunt the Circus, of all places, unescorted? But if she was a prostitute, the poem, would be meaningless, since Ovid employs considerable sympathy and subtlety to make an impression on her, and in the penultimate line (83) merely *thinks* he sees the promise of capitulation in her eye. Whatever this monologue may be, then, it is *not* Ovid's account of how he propositioned a tart.

Such being the case, a natural inference would be that Ovid and his latest girl-of-the-moment are attending the races together—a pleasant excursion with decidedly modern associations. Too modern, indeed, by a long chalk, as we at once realize on reflection. Social difficulties beset this idyllic scene. Under what circumstances, we ask ourselves, could or would a young man legitimately appear in public accompanied by an unchaperoned lady who was not his wife? Again the answer forces itself upon us: only with a *meretrix* or (the next best thing) a *libertina*, a name with unfortunate but hardly accidental associations. But Ovid's companion is clearly neither whore nor freedwoman. He treats her with delicate *social* respect, as an equal: no easy touch there. An unmarried girl of good family, then? Unthinkable. A married lady? Equally unthinkable: discreet private adultery was one thing in Rome, but (except in very special circumstances) flouting public conventions for the whole world to see was quite another. At this point the exasperated reader may well object that if Ovid could not have brought this girl with him, and is not picking her up either, then what in heaven's name *is* supposed to be going on?

Let us compare this poem, for possible illumination, with a related sequence in the *Ars*. AA 1.135–64 (see my note, p. 342) takes the basic material of *Am*. 3.2, but transposes it into didactic advice for others. What Ovid there says, quite clearly, is that the Circus provides admirable conditions for *approaches...to a new courtship (aditus... novo... amori)*. The lady is referred to as *domina* (139), but whether this implies prior acquaintance, or merely hope for the future, is uncertain. What a day at the races can provide, Ovid seems to suggest,

is that intimate *physical proximity* essential for the preliminaries of seduction. Now in both these passages (AA 1.139–42; Am. 3.2.19–20) what rates specific emphasis is *the convenience of the seating-arrangements*. Spectators were packed in close, side by side, irrespective of sex, and a hopeful lover could, by careful manoeuvring, get himself near, or even next to, the lady of his choice. The great advantage, clearly, of such contact lay in its apparent fortuitousness: the occasion both gave it social acceptability and robbed it of any overtly scandalous implications.

This suggests a rather different scene from those hitherto proposed. Ovid has fallen in love with a respectable, and almost certainly married lady. He has not yet made love to her (27–36), and does not even know for certain whether she returns his feelings of passion (83). One possible solution is to seat himself next to her at the races. The poem describes this occasion—but what it discreetly omits (partly on grounds of literary economy, but also as a private social joke, and a hint at Ovid's own obsessional state of mind) is all direct mention of the *other people* who must have been participants in the scene: the lady's husband, probably her maid, perhaps even Ovid's own wife. The scene, in its public aspects, now becomes socially innocuous.

On the other hand, Ovid's monologue most certainly does not. No *vir* in the world, however complaisant, is going to sit by while a young poet and gadabout not only flirts outrageously with his wife, but tells him, the husband, to sit a little less close to her (21–2). It is those lines that first give us an inkling of what Ovid is up to. 'Hey, you on the right there, *whoever you are (quicumque es)*', he says: the joke is shared between poet and percipient reader, who will (knowing Roman social rules) have instantly deduced the husband's unseen and unspoken presence, and chuckle at this cheekily oblique reference to him. But, finally, why *does* the husband keep so obligingly quiet during this elegantly seductive monologue, which subjects his wife to a species of lingering verbal rape? For the same simple reason, I would argue, that the girl herself says never a word either: because *they do not hear what Ovid is saying*. The entire monologue (and not line 83 alone) is conceived as an elaborate fantasy going on in the poet's head, perhaps encouraged by one casual flirtatious glance. Not a word of it—except perhaps Ovid's exhortations to the charioteer, which are legitimate on such an occasion—is to be thought of as being spoken aloud. Of course, if the scene portrays Corinna, and Corinna was in fact here based on Ovid's first wife, then the social proprieties are at once restored, and the joke will lie in Ovid's use of a respectable marital outing to hint at elegant seduction.

11–12 The chariots ran anti-clockwise, past a central barrier known as

the *spina*, which they kept on their left. At the turns, a skilful charioteer would edge as close to the end-posts (*metae*) as he could without actually touching them.

15–16 The myth of Pelops and Hippodameia is, to put it mildly, odd. Hippodameia was the daughter of Oenomaus, King of Elis, who nursed an incestuous passion for her, to which she did not respond. To add to his frustration, Oenomaus had been warned by an oracle that his future son-in-law would be responsible for his death. When suitors came seeking Hippodameia's hand, Oenomaus sent them off in their chariot, with his daughter, and himself pursued them. If they got to Corinth ahead of him, they could marry Hippodameia; if Oenomaus caught up with them (which he invariably did) he speared them to death. By the time Pelops came along, there were a dozen suitors' heads nailed to the king's gable. Hippodameia, however, fell in love with Pelops, and bribed Oenomaus' charioteer, Myrtilus, to weaken the linchpins in the wheels of the king's chariot, so that he crashed and was dragged to his death. Even so, Pelops had a narrow escape when he slackened rein at sight of Hippodameia, and just missed being skewered by her urgent father.

19–20 The seating-places in the rows were marked off from each other by a groove (*linea*) carved in the marble.

29–30 Atalanta, daughter of Iasus, was, like Artemis/Diana, a virgin huntress, who took part in the famous hunt for the Calydonian Boar, and wrestled successfully against Peleus. When her father wanted her to marry, she made her suitors race against her, giving them a slight start, and herself running armed. Like Oenomaus in similar circumstances, if she caught the suitor, she killed him. However, if he kept his distance, he married her. Various suitors were neatly dispatched; Atalanta remained a virgin. Milanion, knowing the conditions, brought with him some golden apples he had obtained from Aphrodite. These he dropped at intervals during the race. Atalanta, being both greedy and curious, stopped to pick them up; thus Milanion won both the race and his desired bride.

43–4 The races were preceded by a procession (*pompa*) of ivory images of the gods, borne on wagons or floats, and escorted by officials. The *pompa*, setting out from the Capitol, made its way through the Forum and the Forum Boarium, and so to the Circus by way of the Via Sacra. Once there, it paraded the entire length of the racetrack, with the spectators applauding their patron deities.

54 Castor's reputation as a horseman, and Pollux's as a boxer, go back to Homer's time: see *Iliad* 3.237.

66 The praetor gave the signal for the race to begin by dropping a

napkin.

73–4 Races could be stopped and restarted, by public demand among other reasons, in the manner here described.

3.3

Here Ovid offers us what might be described as an elementary essay in eroticized theology. His girl has sworn various oaths, only to break them; yet, like the victims of that famous malediction in ‘The Jackdaw of Rheims’, she is not one penny the worse as a result. To add insult to injury (lines 13–14), when she generously swore by Ovid’s eyes as well as her own, hers remained bright and sparkling, while his promptly became afflicted with one of those numerous ophthalmic complaints to which Romans were apparently so prone. His conclusion from this is simple and predictable. Either the gods do not exist at all, or else they have a partiality for the fair sex which lacks any basis in reason and justice. No such concessions are made where men are concerned: Ovid himself, bleary and smarting, is a nice example (like the lightning-struck temple in line 35) of the gods’ ability to hit the wrong target. He begins with an ejaculation of incredulity, but ends, as a good womanizer, by admitting that if he were a god, he would surely act in the same way.

This poem clearly looks forward to a famous passage in the *Ars* (1.631ff.; cf. my note, p. 358), which, after a very similar preamble, advocates a species of cynical unbelieving lip-service to divinity: ‘The existence of gods is expedient: let us therefore assume it’ (*expedit esse deos, et, ut expedit, esse putemus*).

17–18 Cassiopea, wife of Cepheus, boasted that she was more beautiful than the Nereids—just as Niobe boasted that she was more blessed in her children than Leto, and with equally disastrous results. Poseidon, on the resentful Nereids’ behalf, sent a flood and a sea-monster to ravage the land (Ethiopia or Joppa, accounts vary). The Libyan god Ammon, through his oracle, predicted an end of these afflictions if Cassiopea’s daughter Andromeda was left bound to a rock as a sacrificial victim for the sea-monster. This was duly done, but Perseus killed the monster and rescued Andromeda.

23–4 This blunt speculation as to the possible non-existence of the gods (cf. below, *Am.* 3.9.35–6) goes one step beyond the Epicurean notion of divine quietism and non-intervention preached by Lucretius in the *De Rerum Natura*, and occasionally postulated by Horace. See *AA* 1.637ff., and my note, pp. 358–9.

33–4 The pragmatic sentiment is akin to Hesiod’s: why bother with righteousness if sinners are to flourish?

37–40 Zeus seduced Semele, daughter of Cadmus: Hera discovered the liaison, and persuaded Semele to ask her lover to appear to her in all his glory, as he did when wooing Hera. Since Zeus had promised Semele to do whatever she asked, he could not refuse: he ‘came to her bridal chamber in a chariot, with lightnings and thunderings, and launched a thunderbolt’. Semele, not surprisingly, was either burnt to a crisp or else died of fright (accounts differ), but in any case aborted her six–(or seven–) month child, Dionysus. Zeus, ever resourceful, proceeded to sew the baby into his thigh, whence it was born at the proper term.

3.4

It is fashionable nowadays to regard *Am.* 3.4. and 2.19 as expressing directly contrary views, and to use them, on this basis, as evidence for Ovid’s ‘insincerity’, for his adaptation of various literary poses, or *personas*, which bear no direct relation to his own attitudes or beliefs. A careful comparison of the two poems does not bear out this assumption. The contrast is more apparent than real. Lock up your wife, says Ovid in 2.19: if you don’t, I’ll get bored with chasing her. What’s the point of locking her up? he asks in 3.4: you can’t forcibly instil the instinct for chastity. Yet in neither case is this proposition the real psychological point of Ovid’s discourse. What *both* poems emphasize, repeatedly, is the excitement of deprivation, the boredom of free indulgence.

Far from contradicting one another in essence, 2.19 and 3.4 both emphasize the same central psychological point from different angles. In this context, to lock up or not lock up a wife implies no real inconsistency on Ovid’s part. In the first case he is concerned with the wife and her lover, in the second with the husband; but his central thesis remains identical throughout. To put the lady under physical restraint will stimulate both her and her lover: therefore the lover is concerned that all husbands should be coercive. To leave her completely free will remove adultery’s major attraction, both for her and for any potential seducer: thus a wise husband will give his wife maximum freedom. Ovid merely reapplies his argument, he does not reverse it. The fundamental premiss still stands. With Penelope available, the wooers held off (4.23–4): Ovid’s advice to Odysseus in this matter would, clearly, be the reverse of any hints he might be disposed to hand out to Antinoüs and Co. Are we therefore entitled to accuse him of frivolous literary mask-switching? The answer is self-evident, and only a currently fashionable weakness for addling straightforward human reactions with dubious infusions of rhetoric could ever have led anyone to suppose otherwise.

19–20 For Argus the herdsman, the All-seeing, who had eyes all over his body, cf. my note on *Am.* 2.2.44–6, p. 292.

21–4 For Danāe see my note on *Am.* 2.19.27–8, pp. 309–10.

37–40 This flat statement apropos the *rusticitas* of objecting to adultery, plus the unequivocal use of the word *coniunx* (wife), contrasts strikingly with the formal statement at the beginning of the *Ars* (1.31–4), and the long apologia in *the Black Sea Letters* (3.3.49–64), both of which assert–unconvincingly, but by then he was under political pressure–that Ovid is writing exclusively for, and about, *demi-mondaines* in the shape of *meretrices* or *libertinae*: see In trod., pp. 71ff. The ‘illegitimacy’ of Ilia’s offspring by Mars was due to her status as a Vestal Virgin: cf. *Am.* 3.6.49.

3.5

2ff. The scene of the dream much resembles that stylized landscape which Ovid so often describes (e.g. at *Am.* 3.1. Iff. when narrating his encounter with Elegy and Tragedy), and which, to judge from Pompeian wall-paintings, formed part of every Roman artist’s stock-in-trade.

31–2 Dream-interpretation was a popular skill throughout antiquity, from Homer’s day onwards. When such dreams, as here, presented themselves in symbolic form, they required elucidation by an interpreter, or *oneirocrit*.

39–40 The symbolism of crow = bawd is precisely in line with the attributes of the crow in folklore: longevity, loquacity, mischief-making.

3.6

This, with the single exception of 1.8, is the longest poem in the *Amores*, and, perhaps by coincidence, concludes with a very similar imprecation (cf. 3.6.105–6 and 1.8.113–14). It belongs to the category of entreaties directed to one who cannot be assumed to listen to them. Others include 1.6, where Ovid apostrophizes a silent doorkeeper; 1.12 (esp. lines 7–30), in which he addresses his mistress’s letter-tablets; 1.13 (Aurora); 2.3 (a guardian eunuch); and 2.9 (Cupid). Only one of these apart from the present poem (1.12) involves an inanimate object. We do not know the location of the river which suggested these lines (if, indeed, it was not pure literary invention): Sulmona is one possibility, but Ovid’s travels in Asia Minor and Sicily could well have included just such a *contretemps*. In any case the river, becomes an ideal excuse for an equally hyperabundant flow of rhetoric on Ovid’s part.

The poem falls naturally into four sections. We have an exordium (1–22), in which Ovid complains to the river about his inability to cross it, and explores (without success) the chances of finding some solution to his problem. There follows (23–44) an appeal: the river should help a lover, because rivers in the past (a catalogue of eight such is given) have been highly susceptible to love themselves. The third section (45–82) gives more extended treatment to the myth of Ilia and the Anio, a theme already treated by Ennius in his *Annals*. Finally (83–106) Ovid, seeing that—despite his display of rhetorical skill—the river is running higher than ever, abandons the whole enterprise with a brisk volley of curses. Why waste literary talent on so unappreciative an audience? Fine words, clearly, are no better for stemming torrents than for buttering proverbial parsnips.

Here, I think, we may detect a significant leitmotiv running through the *Amores*. Proud though Ovid is of his verbal persuasiveness and poetic genius, the world (he well knows) too often remains deaf to such pleas. He is, in fact, habitually unlucky in the objects of his addresses. To consider only those listed above: none of them does what he wants, or even bothers to answer him. The porter's door remains shut, the note from his mistress turns out a put-off, Dawn comes up as usual, the eunuch makes no concessions, and whether Cupid chooses to pierce Ovid's heart or capriciously ignore him is not, clearly, dictated by the poet's own preferences in the matter. His magic, in the last resort, is no more reliable than that of the old bawd in 1.8: less so, perhaps, in the present instance, since Dipsas was at least credited with the ability to make rivers run backwards to their source (1.8.6). Thus the association of the two poems suggested above may not, after all, be wholly fortuitous: both explore the scope and limitations of the magician-artist's ability to transform the world by something more than reason. We are reminded, forcibly, that the same Latin word, *carmen*, does duty for 'poem' and 'spell'. What Ovid sees, with a certain wry realism, is that the magic holds no guarantee, that art can no more be relied upon to conquer than love. It is, I would argue, no coincidence that when he edited *Amores*² Ovid placed this poem immediately before one describing a case of sexual impotence.

13ff. Perseus, the son of Danaë, was required by King Polydectes of Seriphos to fetch him the head of the Gorgon Medusa. Guided by Hermes and Athena, he found a way to get winged sandals and the cap of Hades (which conferred invisibility) from the Nymphs. Equipped with these, and an adamant sickle provided by Hermes, he successfully carried out his mission. The airborne chariot from which Triptolemus obtained the first seed-corn (with instructions to sow it world-wide) was Demeter's, and drawn by serpents, which may

account for Ovid's association of the two legends.

17–18 This passage is not alone in expressing scepticism as regards the reality of myth: cf. also *Am.* 3.12.21–42; *AA* 1.637ff.; *Trist.* 2.64 (which warns the reader against believing the transformations narrated in the *Metamorphoses*).

20 'So may you flow for ever!': the wish, or prayer, is stylized, part of the *do ut des* pattern inherent in Roman dealings with the gods or other numinous beings.

25–6 Inachus, son of Ocean and Tethys (like numerous other Greek rivers), was both an early king of Argos and a local Argive river-god. Melia, also a daughter of Ocean, bore him Phoroneus and Aegialeus, besides other offspring (including a centaur) sired by various fathers including Silenus, Poseidon and Apollo. Her connection with Bithynia remains obscure.

27–8 According to Homer, the river which flowed in the plain of Troy was called Scamander by mortals, but Xanthus (perhaps because of its yellowish-muddy waters) by the gods. Only Ovid records Xanthus' passion for Neaera. There were (to complicate matters) several mythical nymphs of that name.

29–30 The river Alpheius travelled underground from Elis to Sicily, where its waters mingled with those of the Arethusan spring—still extant—on Ortygia. This fancy lies behind the myth describing how the river-god Alpheius pursued the nymph Arethusa, who fled to Ortygia and was there metamorphosed into a spring. Nothing daunted, Alpheius (in his liquid *persona*) went underground after her.

31–2 Ovid would seem to have conflated two legends here: (i) that in which the nymph Creusa, daughter of Ocean and Earth (Ge), was seduced by the river(-god) Peneius in Thessaly, and bore him Hypseus, later king of the Lapiths, and (ii) that in which another Creusa, daughter of Erechtheus and Praxithea, married Xuthus, son of Hellen, to whom she bore Achaeus and Ion. Only Ovid mentions the ravishment by Peneius of a Creusa previously promised to Xuthus.

33–4 Again, Ovid's version of the myth diverges from other accounts. Asopus, the Boeotian river-god, was generally held to have married Metope (daughter of another river-god), on whom he sired twelve, or perhaps twenty, daughters—including Thebe. While it is not impossible that Asopus was also supposed to have bred children by his own daughter, Thebe's husband is given as Zethus. Yet another tradition makes Thebe a daughter of Prometheus: the one constant factor on which everyone agrees is that she gave Boeotian Thebes its name.

35–8 The river-god Acheloüs fought with Heracles for possession of Deianeira; though he had the power of turning himself into various forms (e.g. a snake and a bull) Acheloüs was nevertheless defeated, and during his bull-metamorphosis Heracles broke off one of the river-god's horns. Deianeira, the daughter of Oeneus, king of Calydon in Aetolia, by his wife Althaea, thus had Meleager for a brother.

39–42 Nothing, apart from this reference, is known of Asopus' daughter Evanthe.

43–4 Salmonis, better known as Tyro, daughter of Salmoneus, fell in love with the river Enipeus in Thessaly, and often declared her passion on its banks. Hearing her do so, Poseidon seduced her in the likeness of the river, and she bore him twin sons, Pelias and Neleus.

45–82 The Anio (now the Teverone) rises in the Sabine hills, and forms a famous waterfall at Tibur (Tivoli); it finally joins the Tiber as a tributary. The myth of Ilia (or Rhea Silvia) and her connection with the Anio had been narrated by Ennius in his *Annals*: as Ovid later wrote (*Trist* 2.259–60), 'If a lady dips into the *Annals* (and what could be rougher going?) why, she'll read how Ilia became a mother.' She was a Vestal Virgin who was seduced by Mars, during a total eclipse, in a cave whither she had fled to escape a wolf. In due course she bore twins, Romulus and Remus. Her uncle Amulius condemned her to be drowned in the Anio for her unchastity; however, the river-god took pity on her and made her his bride. She is referred to as a 'Trojan lady' and 'daughter of Ilium's royal line' because of her descent from Aeneas. Again, Ovid's version differs from received tradition—in particular by making Ilia choose to commit suicide rather than being forcibly drowned.

91–6 This description, which may strike readers in northern Europe as somewhat exaggerated, is in fact a clinically accurate picture of most small rivers in Greece or the more mountainous regions of Italy.

3.7

The explicitness of this poem has led scholars, perhaps unconsciously, to isolate it from the sequence in which it occurs. This is subtly misleading. *Amores* 3.5–8, taken together, form a most interesting overall pattern, psychological no less than thematic. The dream of desertion which forms the core of 3.5 has become reality (whether factual or poetic) by 3.8, in which we hear that Ovid's mistress has left him for a soldier. Why? In 3.8 the reason given is financial gain: the lady, like most Ovidian ladies, proves a gold-digger at heart. Behind the 'official' reason, however, a second, more embarrassing one lies imperfectly concealed. The desertion in 3.5 was caused, in part at

least, by a lack of sufficient male ardour, and even in 3.8 Ovid stresses the soldier's crudely attractive virility at least as much as his wealth (cf. Juv. 6.103–13). Ovid's rhetoric fails to impress that all-too-symbolic river in 3.6; his poetic talent cannot compete with 'a bloody oaf who slashed his way to the cash' in 3.8. Just to make sure that no one, even in a pre-Freudian era, misses the point, the poet (licking his own wounds masochistically, but squeezing a good poem out in the process) spends 3.7 describing, in detail, how he first alarmed and finally antagonized his mistress by failing to achieve an erection during love-making. We remember the premonitory dream of 3.5 with a sense of *déjà vu*, and learn of the new lover in 3.8 without surprise.

Psychological impotence is a familiar enough phenomenon today but in antiquity the only explanation anyone could think of for it was that the victim had been 'hexed' by some witch or rival (see below, my note to lines 27–36). The problem was seldom described—Ovid's is the most circumstantial as well as the most detailed case on record.

24–5 Ovid names the three girls: Chlide, Peitho and Libas. All are Greek, and all carry suggestive secondary meanings in their names: wantonness, persuasion and 'anything that drips or trickles' (Liddell and Scott on *libas*).

27–36 For other Ovidian references to magic, see *Am.* 1.8.5–18 and 1.14.39–43, *AA* 2.99–106, 415–26, *RA* 249–90, 719–20, *MF* 35–42, with my notes ad loc. The notion that impotence could be caused by hostile magic is also propounded by Tibullus, 1.5.41, cf. 1.8.17–18. Thessaly was regarded throughout antiquity as the home *par excellence* of witches (cf. the modern reputation of Transylvania for breeding vampires). The particular form of sympathetic magic which involved piercing an image of the victim with pins, and, if the image was of wax, melting it in the fire, was known in Greek as *katadesmós*, and to the Romans as *defixio*. Many such images, most often of lead, have been found with accompanying curse-inscriptions.

39–40 cf. *Am.* 1.5.19–20. The echo, and the contrast of mood, are instructive.

41–2 Nestor of Pylos and Tithonus, the immortal, but far from ageless, husband of Aurora (the Dawn: cf. above, *Am.* 1.13.1–2, with my note ad loc.) were taken as typical representatives of extreme old age.

51–2 For the myth of Tantalus, see my note on *Am.* 2.2.44–6 above (p. 292).

3.8

In Rome there was always an articulate upper (or, later, upper-middle)

class eager to proclaim that those further down the social ladder were getting positions and privileges to which their rank–talent being irrelevant–did not entitle them. Senators grumbled about equestrians, old middle-class families poured scorn on *novi homines*, local squires grew apoplectic over jumped-up foreigners. They were money-grubbers (i.e. financially shrewder than those who denigrated them), they were vulgar, they had no proper sense of precedence. In the last resort, such critics would invoke the *Saturnia regna*, the lost Golden Age–pre-agricultural, pre-capitalist, an idyllic top people’s fantasy of rural peace and plenty, analogous to the ‘ancestral constitution’ so popular as a rallying-cry among Athenian ultra-conservatives in the late fifth century BC.

In 3.8 Ovid reveals most of these traits, modified or partially camouflaged to suit his own special circumstances. To begin with, the scale of values he evokes is aesthetic rather than class-based: poetic genius should be (but is not) valued above a high credit rating. The argument is very much *ad hominem*, or, in this case, *ad feminam*, and recalls that of *Am.* 1.10: Ovid’s mistress has ditched him for a wealthier man. But he is not only richer, he is a *parvenu*, Ovid, we know, took a conscious pride in his long equestrian pedigree (cf. *Am.* 3.15.5–6, *Trist.* 4.10.7–8), and contrasted it, specifically, with the pretensions of those *equites* whose status had been earned, all too recently, through military service–i.e. who had fought on the right side in the Civil Wars, and earned rich rewards as a result. These men provided the Augustan regime’s most solid support and regularly used their army career as a means of entering the equestrian order. Equally, many merchants and traders (often freedmen) who had bought up the lands of the proscribed had no trouble in proving their assets at the figure (400,000 sesterces) required for civilian admission to the ranks of the *equites*.

So Ovid’s objections to his successful rival are not only moral-aesthetic and dictated by sexual jealousy, but also based on the crudest sort of class-snobbery. In addition, we have a restatement of the poet’s contemptuous revulsion at the whole notion of fighting and militarism together with a bitter reproach for the girls who–whether through avarice or sexual inclination–found soldiers attractive as lovers. Whether it was a covert sense of personal inadequacy that drove him to compensate by describing sexual conquest as *militia* we cannot tell. The argument here leans heavily on the charge of feminine gold-digging. The girl who can bring herself to touch a soldier does so because she is *avara*, rapacious (line 22): the myth of Jupiter (Zeus) and Danaë is couched in terms which reinforce such a hypothesis. The value of Saturn’s reign (35–8) was, in the first

instance, that precious metals, and thus *a fortiori* coinage and capitalism, remained unknown: beyond this, Ovid does no more than pay traditional lip-service to a kind of dim mesolithic paradise, the nomadic hunter's world, minus all the back-breaking business associated with farming.

This line of thought leads him into somewhat dangerous political speculation. Having poured scorn on the class which constituted the backbone of the Augustan regime, having reiterated his contempt for military virtues as such, Ovid goes on (45–56) to equate the whole process of imperial expansion with greedy financial opportunism (a judgement with which not a few modern historians would concur); to label the Senate, the judiciary and the equestrian order as mere vulgar plutocracies; and to include in this programme of grab-as-grab-can the Caesarian deification principle—overseas acquisitions matched by a take-over bid in heaven. Having delivered himself of his scathing indictment, the poet proceeds (57–66) to wash his hands of public life altogether. This, at least, was no empty rhetorical gesture, but a bold reminder of Ovid's earlier withdrawal from the *cursus honorum*. He had had the offer to a high official career under the regime, and had deliberately rejected it (see Introd., pp. 28ff.) To abstain from politics itself constitutes a political gesture, and Ovid's contempt for the aims, ideals, propaganda and supporters of Augustanism is only too apparent in his work. How seriously, in the last resort, could anyone who believed in poetic divinity take the idea of a deified emperor?

Yet the instinctive repulsion is also, inevitably, laced with envy. Ovid might reject contemporary Roman politics, and withhold himself, in fastidious disdain, from the military-imperial-financial ideal of expansion, conquest and provincial administration; but again and again he reveals his covert envy of the prerogatives (social, sexual or political) enjoyed by highly placed civil or military employees of the regime. From this viewpoint the impotence, whether physical or symbolic, which we find in some poems of Bk 3 is no accident: it extends through every aspect of life in Rome, from politics to love-making. Indeed, as 3.8 makes very clear, the categories tended to overlap. Ovid's physical impotence had its antecedents in the collapse of the Republic. By leaving him for a *nouveau-riche* military *eques* his mistress was simply acknowledging—and endorsing—the values of the new world in which she lived: she went with the fashion, while Ovid obstinately stood out against it. The bitterness which this poem reveals is rooted in something more subtle than simple jealousy.

1–4 The complaint that girls value cash above poetry is a regular one of Ovid's (cf. e.g. AA 2.273–6); it can also be found in Propertius and Tibullus. While a certain contempt for cash values does seem to

characterize the landed-aristocratic phase of many societies (cf. the early medieval attitude to money-making and usury), there is little evidence to support Ovid's wishful thinking when he writes: 'Time was when poetic talent/Came dearer than gold'. Homer, surely, could have enlightened him on this topic.

29–34 For the legend of Danaë, impregnated by Zeus in the form of a shower of gold, see my note to *Am.* 2.19.27–8 (above, pp. 309–10).

51–2 The temple of Romulus on the Quirinal dated back as far as 435 BC (Livy 4.21): it was burnt down in 49 BC, and its rebuilding completed by Augustus some thirty-three years later. (This latter date, 16 BC, is probably alluded to by Ovid, and would thus provide some slight corroboration for the publication of *Amores*¹ at a subsequent point: cf. my note on *Am.* 1.14.45–6. Martial (1.71.9) refers to a temple of Bacchus on the Palatine. There were several temples to Hercules within Rome's city-limits, one of them at the Colline Gate, another near the Circus Flaminius. The temple of (Julius) Caesar referred to was the *aedes divi Iulii* adjacent to the Forum, dedicated, again, by Augustus.

55–6 Minimum qualifications of capital were laid down for both senators (800,000 sesterces, later raised to a million) and *equites* (400,000 sesterces). These figures were habitually far exceeded, and even a man such as the Younger Pliny—who was very far from the top of the pile, either socially or financially—astonishes us by the scale of his wealth and munificence.

3.9

Our knowledge of Tibullus' life is comparatively meagre. He was born c. 60–55 BC (cf. the chronological list of poets in Ovid's autobiographical testament, *Trist.* 4.10.51–4), served between 31 and 27 on the staff of M. Valerius Messalla Corvinus, and died, soon after Virgil, in the late autumn of 19. Ovid's poem may thus be presumed to date from 19 or 18. Like *Am.* 2.6, celebrating the death of a pet parrot, it is composed as a formal *epicedion* or funeral lament (cf. above, p. 295), divided into five sections: (i) an introductory address to the mourners (1–16); (ii) the *laudatio* or *lamentatio*, including (a) the 'what avails it...' theme (21–34) and (b) a ritual outburst (Greek *schetliasmós*) against unjust fate (17–20, 35–46); (iii) the deathbed scene (47–58); (iv) a *consolatio* (59–66); and (v) the burial, with a prayer for the repose of the dead (67–8).

The two poems run along strikingly parallel lines, and thus almost insist on joint consideration. Further, it is possible for modern readers (and presumably ancient ones too) to find the *mise en scène* of 2.6,

despite its feathered addressee, more attractive than that of the present poem. Ovid seldom produced effects by accident, and I suspect that the correlation Tibullus: parrot' was no random juxtaposition either. While his grief was genuine, one unregenerate corner of his mind may well have found the dead poet's private life mildly risible, and his verses not wholly free from excessive (i.e. parrot-like) *imitatio*.

1–2 For the Ethiopian prince Memnon, slain at Troy by Achilles, see my note on *Am.* 1.13.3–4 (P. 285), and cf. *Met.* 13.621–2: his mother the Dawn (Eos, Aurora) wept tears of dew for him each morning. Achilles was killed at the Scaean Gate either by Apollo, or else by Paris under Apollo's direction, and mourned for by his mother Thetis, the sea-nymph.

3–4 Ovid derives the word 'elegy' (*elegeion* or *elegeia*) from *e legei*, '[he] cries Woe!', a fanciful etymology which arose in antiquity from the belief that the elegy was, by origin, a lament. In fact, surviving early elegies are largely unconnected with lamentation, and it is more likely that *elegos* is connected with some foreign word for 'flute', such as survives in Armenian *elegn-*, and that the elegiac was originally a flute-song.

13–14 Iulus, or Ascanius, was the son of Aeneas by either Creusa or Lavinia. Cupid is described as Aeneas' brother since they were both sons of Venus: half-brother would be a more accurate description, Aeneas being sired by Anchises, a mortal, while Cupid (Eros) was the offspring of some god (Hermes, Ares or Zeus: accounts differ).

15–16 The legend of Aphrodite (Venus) and her passion for Adonis exists in at least two different versions, but is based—like the parallel myth of Aphrodite and Anchises, also mentioned here by Ovid—on the archaic Anatolian belief in the Great Mother and her consort, who dies with the year but revivifies in the spring. According to one version, Aphrodite first saw Adonis out hunting, and fell in love with him. Through jealousy, either Ares or Artemis ensured that Adonis was killed by a wild boar. From the dead youth's blood there sprang up flowers—anemones or roses.

17–20 The divine inspiration and numinous nature of poets is referred to elsewhere by Ovid: see esp. *AA* 3.549: 'God is in us, we have dealings with heaven' (cf. 405); *RA* 813; and *Trist.* 4.10.42.

21–4 Orpheus, son of either Oeagrus or (less well documented) Apollo, and the Muse Calliope, was torn to pieces by the Thracian Bassarids (Maenads) in a ritual *sparagmós*: neither his divine parentage nor his fame as a musician (Ovid implies) sufficed to avert this unpleasant demise. Orpheus had a brother, Linus, who was killed by Heracles, and mourned with the ritual cry *ailinon*, explained as 'Woe for Linus!'

but in fact perhaps derived from the Phoenician *ai lanu*, meaning simply ‘woe to us’. Ovid, as so often, follows an unusual mythical tradition in making Apollo the father of both Orpheus and Linus: his use of the parenthetical phrase ‘They say’ (*dicitur*) suggests that he was aware of this.

25–8 The dark lake of Aornos or Avernus, ‘hell’s black waters’, now the Lago d’Averno, has a physical location, in Campania, between Cumae and the Bay of Baiae. It lies in the crater of an extinct volcano: this may account for the ancient tradition of mephitic fumes rising from fissures in the adjacent rocks, fumes so strong that no bird (a, privative particle, + *ornos*, another typical ancient aetiologizing false derivation) could fly across it. This quality, combined with its gloomy isolation—it lay amid dense woods—may explain how it came to be regarded as an entrance to the underworld.

31–2 Various poems in the first book of Tibullus’ elegies mention his mistress Delia (a pseudonym, it would seem, for a lady named Plania). The second book deals with a later mistress, who rejoiced in the mildly disquieting name of Nemesis.

33–4 These lines are a conscious imitation of Tib. 1.3.23–6, where Tibullus, lying sick on Corcyra, asks the absent Delia, rhetorically, what help to him, now, is her observance of the various rites of Isis: the lustrations, the periods of sexual abstinence? Both in Egypt and, later, throughout the Graeco-Roman world, Isis was a renowned healer.

35–6 For Ovid’s professed scepticism concerning the gods and their myths cf. AA 1.637ff., with my introductory note, pp. 358–90.

45 The hill-town of Eryx (now Monte San Giuliano) in West Sicily was best known in antiquity for its temple of Aphrodite-Astarte, served by *hieroduli*, or sacred prostitutes, and traditionally said to have been founded by Aeneas.

47–8 In Tib. 1.3.3–8 we read how the poet fell ill on the island of Corcyra (Corfu), and was temporarily left behind by his commander and patron Messalla: this must have been in 31/30 BC, shortly after the battle of Actium. The illness does not seem to have lasted long, since both Tibullus himself (1.7.9ff.) and the Tibullan *vita* inform us that he accompanied Messalla on his campaign in Aquitania. On 25 September 27 BC Messalla celebrated a triumph, to which Tibullus devotes a poem (1.7).

61–4 Catullus, Calvus and Gallus are cited here, *honoris causa*, as the best of the early Roman love-elegists. For G. Cornelius Gallus (69–26 BC) see *Am.* 1.15, 29, AA 3.334, RA 765, and my notes ad loc: he

addressed four books of love-elegies to Mark Antony's ex-mistress Cytheris, whom he called Lycoris, and took his own life rather than face possible treason charges from Augustus while Prefect of Egypt. To single out this unperson for praise was courageous but tactless. G. Valerius Catullus (84–54 BC), best known for his poems to Lesbia (? Clodia), was labelled *doctus* (I translate this epithet as 'poet and scholar') in recognition of his literary Alexandrianism—a taste he shared with his close friend and fellow-poet G. Licinius Calvus (82–? 47 BC), whose oratory was by some critics rated above that of Cicero.

3.10

The last six poems of Bk 3 (even 3.13, which at first sight may not appear relevant to the sequence) chronicle those *odi et amo* vicissitudes, those violent shifts of emotional mood which are virtually inseparable from the break-up of a sexual liaison like that which Ovid describes, in the *Amores*, as existing between himself and Corinna. They also prepare us for the valediction to love-elegy pronounced in the envoi (3.15). The present poem transfers Ovid's reproaches—on the surface—from Corinna herself to the goddess Ceres: at least on this occasion his mistress can produce a legitimate excuse for nine days' sexual abstinence. Yet the undercurrent of personal suspicion remains: such occasions often provided girls with an easy pretext for avoiding intercourse in which they had no wish to indulge, something less obvious than the time-honoured and conventional headache. The paradox of a fertility-goddess imposing chastity is not lost on Ovid; the festival here described makes an interesting—and deliberate—contrast with the feast of Juno in 3.13 (see below, p. 334).

1–2 The festival here described is also mentioned by Ovid in the *Metamorphoses* (10.431ff.). It took place in early August, and should not be confused with the Cerealia of 12–19 April, described by Ovid in the *Fasti* (4.393ff.). The period of abstention, as for the rites of Isis, was nine days and nine nights.

3 Ceres was often depicted, in statues and paintings, as crowned with wheat-ears.

7–14 For primitive life, as a stylized *topos* in Roman literature, and its comparison with the blessings brought by Ceres (or developed agricultural techniques) see esp. Ovid *Fast.* 4.395ff., Virg. *Georg.* 1.147ff. In this tradition the acorn is regularly mentioned as a pre-cereal staple food. Lines 11–14 form a near-parody of the formal hymn in praise of Ceres which we find at *Met.* 5.341ff., and which is familiar from other sources: see, e.g., Virg. *Georg.* 1.147ff.

18 Though Ceres specializes in what Hamlet once referred to as

‘country matters’, Ovid emphasizes that she is ‘no simple rustic’, his use of the epithet *rustica* implying that sort of old-fashioned rural prudishness which insists on chastity merely through lack of urban sophistication.

19–24 Cretans were regarded as proverbial liars in antiquity. The Pauline Epistle to Titus (1.12) quotes a line by Epimenides to this effect: ‘The Cretans are always liars, evil beasts, slow bellies.’ Zeus (here Romanized as ‘Jove’) was, according to one legend, born to Rhea in a mountain-cave on Crete (whither she had resorted to prevent the child being swallowed at birth by its father, Cronos), and guarded there by the Curetes, while the nymphs provided milk from the horn of Amalthea.

25ff. The union of Ceres (Demeter) with Iasius or Iasion ‘in a thrice-ploughed furrow’ is clear evidence that the myth embodied a primitive fertility-ritual. The child of their intercourse was Ploutos, Wealth.

41 Minos was the son of Zeus and Europa, and brother of Rhadamanthus: during his life he acquired fame as a lawgiver while king of Crete, and after his death both he and Rhadamanthus became judges in Hades.

45–6 Persephone, daughter of Demeter, was carried off by Pluto, lord of Hades, and became his queen. When Demeter, after searching everywhere for her daughter, finally learnt (from Helios, the Sun) what had become of her, she persuaded Zeus to decree that henceforth Persephone should spend part of the year only (one half or one third: accounts differ) with Pluto, and the rest in the upper world ‘with the gods’. This, again, is a classic fertility-myth: Demeter and Persephone are the not-so-remote ancestors of John Barleycorn, with Persephone’s spell in Hades corresponding to winter in the agricultural year-cycle.

3.11 A–B

Though 3.11 appears in our MSS as one undivided poem, the sharp change of tone and attitude after line 32 has led many editors to print it in separate parts.

Rather more misleading as regards Ovid’s fundamental attitude to his chosen theme is the vigorous (and oddly naive) debate between those who take the poem seriously, and those who treat it as a flippant literary *jeu d’esprit*—a debate which in some quarters extends to the *Amores* as a whole. This simplistic division badly underestimates Ovid’s complex irony, his wryly amused self-knowledge, his abundant gift for emotional oxymoron. In particular, the argument that his emotions cannot be taken seriously here *because* of all those literary

borrowings and allusions is a complete non-sequitur: to appreciate its shortcomings we need do no more than apply it to *The Waste Land*, Pound's *Cantos* or David Jones's *The Anathemata*. Joking about serious emotions is an unromantic habit; but then Ovid was not, in the modern sense, a romantic poet.

3.11A

1–4 The opening words echo *Am.* 2.19.49 (where Ovid is complaining, ironically enough, about an over-complaisant husband) and also Prop. 2.8.13–14. The image of a slave losing his chains and achieving emancipation (reinforced by lines 10–12, which emphasize the distinction between servile and freeborn actions) evokes, vividly, the conventional (but here all too real) *servitium amoris*.

5–6 For horns as a symbol of strength see Ovid AA 1.239; to the best of my knowledge the phrase never in antiquity carried the implication of cuckoldry which it did, say, in Elizabethan times.

9–14 This stock description of the *exclusus amator*, the lover-shut-out (cf. my introductory note to *Am.* 1.6, above, p. 274) gains added force from the image of the lover's successor, stumbling away exhausted—before his ousted rival's eyes—after a hard night's work.

15–16 There is an ironic echo here of an earlier passage by Ovid himself (*Am.* 2.10.15), where the fate he wishes for his enemies is to toss in an empty bed, without company.

17–18 There is an ambiguity here hard to reproduce in English. Two of the roles Ovid claims to have fulfilled are those of *custos* (guardian, as in the case of porter or eunuch, as well as escort) and *vir* (husband as well as lover). This ambiguity extends to lines 25–6, where it is by no means clear *whose* house Ovid is hurrying back to (*'veni'*)—his mistress's or his own. See *Introd.*, p. 23.

23–4 The joke here, of course, is that Ovid's advice to his mistress (*Am.* 1.4.17–20, with my notes, p. 272) has been taken, learnt, and turned neatly against him.

29–30 For the garlanding of a vessel that had reached port safely see, e.g., Virgil *Georg.* 1.303–4; Ovid (cf. *RA* 811–12) uses this image to describe escape from sexual involvement. Ovid, furthermore, contrasts the state of his vessel (*lenta* = 'indifferent', often with a sexual connotation) with the 'swelling' (*tumescentes*) waters outside: the symbolism could hardly be more obvious.

3.11B

1–2 The second line is heavy with literary allusion, recalling not only

Catullus' *Odi et amo*, but also a well-known line of Virgil's (embodying a motto that Chaucer put on the Prioress's brooch): *Omnia vincit amor, nos et cedamus amori* (*Eel.* 10.69): 'Love conquers all: let us too yield to love.'

7 Another famous line, imitated by Martial (12.47, a near-direct quotation), who also picks up line 9 in an earlier epigram (8.53.3–4).

13–16' The touchstone here is Tibullus (1.5.7–8); cf. also *Am.* 3.3.11–12.

19–20 In deliberate contrast to 11A 29–30, where Ovid's 'vessel' is safe from the storm raging outside the harbour, these lines show it running before the wind out at sea.

3.12

This poem has been claimed, without even the benefit of superficial plausibility, as evidence for Corinna's fictitious nature.

If Corinna *was* in fact a real person, one interesting conclusion emerges: Ovid's close acquaintances, at least, must have known, or guessed, her identity. That seems likely enough, and not incompatible with a generally well-kept secret: the girl who falsely claimed to be Corinna (*Am.* 2.17.29–30) must have felt she had a good chance of getting away with such a pose in the circles she frequented—which, clearly, were not Ovid's. The publication of the *Amores* facilitated this kind of imposture. The work acquainted all Rome—and posterity—with just as much as Ovid chose to reveal of his affair, and no more. The rest remained known either to him alone, or else to a close group of discreet friends.

We have here convincing evidence of what we might—given Ovid's temperament—have assumed without proof: that is, a cheerfully sceptical attitude to traditional myth. This trait had its psychologically ambivalent side: no one capable of writing the *Metamorphoses* could be described as a simple rationalist, and in that extraordinary poem he often tends to treat his 'fictional monsters' as though they were real: we may note that a large number of the examples chosen here deal with metamorphosis. The recantation in the *Tristia* (2.64) is not entirely convincing. But in various other passages (*Trist.* 3.8.1–2, 4.7.11–20, and above, *Am.* 3.6.13–18), the scepticism is explicit and detailed. These declarations should be borne in mind when considering his famous passage (AA 1.637ff., see below, p. 358) on the existence of the gods.

The general theme continues that of 3.8: poetic talent cannot compete in the social market, and may indeed constitute a positive

handicap to the lover. Seen in this context, the attitude to myth becomes openly deprecatory: Ovid treats the whole process as a harmless form of literary escapism.

13–14 In this couplet Ovid brings off an untranslatable, and very effective, double entendre. The phrase *nocuerunt carmina semper* can mean not only ‘my poems have brought nothing but trouble’, but also ‘spells have always been dangerous’. The *praeceptor amoris* suddenly takes on the nervous *persona* of the Sorcerer’s Apprentice.

15–16 ‘Caesar’s exploits’ are nicely ambiguous in weight here, to be treated as climax or anticlimax according to the reader’s bias.

21–2 Ovid conflates what seem originally to have been two quite distinct mythical figures: (i) Scylla, daughter of Nisus, king of Megara, who pulled out the purple lock of hair on which her father’s life depended; (ii) the monster Scylla, daughter of Crataeis (or Lamia) and Phorcys, the Old Man of the Sea: supposed to have six heads and twelve feet of dogs ‘from the flanks’.

23–40 The catalogue is familiar and traditional. The connection between Perseus, Medusa and Pegasus is close in more ways than one. Perseus killed Medusa, and the winged horse Pegasus was generated from the blood spilt at her decapitation. Perseus acquired winged *sandals* from the daughters of Phorcys, a gift he shared with Hermes. The giant Tityos, offspring of Zeus and Elare, attempted to rape Leto in Delphi. She, however, called her children Apollo and Artemis to her aid, and they shot Tityos to death with their arrows. In Hades he was pegged out for all eternity (rather like Prometheus) while vultures gnawed at his liver. Dragon-tailed Cerberus is known to Homer but there was some dispute in antiquity as to the number of heads this hell-hound possessed. Three, however, was the canonical number. The giant Enceladus was pinned under Sicily by Athena; their combat was sculptured on Apollo’s temple at Delphi. Ovid exaggerates his number of arms: according to Hesiod giants had one hundred arms and fifty heads apiece—enough, one might have thought, to be going on with. For the episode of the Sirens see Homer *Od.* 12.39–54, 158–200. Aeolus and his bag of winds are described at length by Homer, *Od.* 10.1–76; cf. Ovid *Met.* 14.223–32. For the myth of Tantalus see above, *Am.* 2.2.44–6, and my note (p. 292). His daughter Niobe boasted that she was blessed with more children than Leto: Leto promptly had all Niobe’s offspring slaughtered by her own children, Apollo and Artemis, without even the justification of an attempted rape (see above on Tityos). Niobe went to Mt Sipylus in Asia Minor and was there turned to stone as she wept (this part of the myth is aetiological, designed to explain a striking rock-formation). Callisto was a dedicated virgin and hunting-companion of Artemis. Zeus seduced her

forcibly—disguised as either Apollo or, intriguingly, Artemis—and then metamorphosed her into a she-bear to escape Hera’s notice. Hera, however, saw all, and had no trouble in persuading Artemis to shoot Callisto for losing her maidenhead, however involuntarily. At this point Zeus, bent on having the last word, transformed the girl-bear into a famous star. For Philomela see above, *Am.* 2.6.7–10 with my note (p. 295). Jupiter’s erotic disguises are also listed in *Am.* 1.3.21–4, 1.10.1–6 (see my notes, pp. 271, 286); here Ovid refers to his escapade with Leda, when he became a swan, and perhaps also to the eagle form he adopted when he bore off Ganymede; to his seduction of Danaë by approaching her as a shower of gold (above, *Am.* 2.19.27–8, with my note, pp. 309–10); and to his swimming off to Crete with Europa (the ‘hapless virgin’) in the semblance of a bull. The various metamorphoses of Proteus are described by Homer (*Od.* 4.417ff., cf. above, *Am.* 2.13.10). The ‘sown teeth of the dragon’ belong to the legend of Cadmus, who killed a dragon guarding the spring of Ares at Thebes, and on Athena’s advice sowed its teeth: there sprang up then from the sown furrows armed men called Spartoi (‘Sown’) who fought each other. Jason, when at Colchis, similarly sowed some of the dragon’s teeth which Athena had given him. This explains Ovid’s transition to the fire-breathing bulls which Medea’s father Aeëtes ordered Jason to yoke. Phaethon, son of Helios and Clymene, tried to drive the chariot of the Sun, came too near earth, and was struck dead by a thunderbolt from Zeus. He fell into the River Eridanus (Po), where his sisters mourned him in the shape of poplar trees, the amber drops exuding from the tree-trunks forming their tears (Ovid *Met.* 2.349ff.). The ‘sea-goddesses conjured from ships’ can be traced to a passage in Virgil’s *Aeneid* (9.77–122) where, in order to protect Aeneas’ fleet against the incendiary activities of Turnus, the ships are metamorphosed into Nereids: cf. Ovid *Met.* 14.527–65. The myth of the sun turning back in the heavens seems originally to have formed part of a competition between Atreus and Thyestes for the kingship over Mycenae: each produced a portent, but that of Atreus (the sun setting in the east) was adjudged clearly superior. However, Ovid prefers a tradition more popular among Roman poets, that the sun turned back *in horror at Atreus*, who first murdered Thyestes’ children, then served them up to their unsuspecting father for dinner (Ovid *Trist.* 2.391ff., *AA* 1.327ff.). When Zethus and Amphion, the sons of Zeus by Antiope, fortified Thebes, the stones moved of themselves to the music of Amphion’s lyre.

3.13

For any scholar determined to prove structural unity in the *Amores* this poem comes as a considerable embarrassment: perhaps that is

why no adequate discussion of it exists. It is not about love; it does not refer to Corinna, or even to some unnamed mistress; and it breaks one cardinal rule of Roman erotic elegy by mentioning the poet's wife. There are no manifest echoes of Propertius. The subject-matter rather looks forward to those antiquarian, folkloric and religious interests which Ovid was soon to explore in the *Fasti* (*Fast.* 6.49 alludes to 'the Juno-worshippers of Falerii'). Just possibly this was an early piece that survived the pruning between *Amores*¹ and *Amores*.² Ovid's Faliscan wife cannot be his third, who was Roman-born, and this leaves us hesitating between the two earlier marriages, neither of which lasted long (*Trot.* 4.10.69–72). Both belonged to his early youth. As we saw earlier (*Am.* 2.16 and my introductory note, p. 305), Ovid, despite his urban instincts, retained an observant eye for the countryside; but this is the only instance in the *Amores* of a rural piece unattached to any kind of central erotic motif.

If the placing of 3.13 was deliberate, perhaps it is to be explained through juxtaposition—and contrast—with 3.14, Ovid's agonized yet elegant plea to a mistress (unnamed, but clearly Corinna) whose casual infidelities have all but killed their relationship. Ovid juxtaposes (embarrassingly for literary formalists) erotic convention with the solid background of provincial Roman society, where in-laws are important and feast-days not to be ignored. Reality, in various guises, disrupts the dream and terminates the artifice. Passion, whether literary or erotic (and for Ovid, as for Cavafy, there is no clear dividing-line), cannot, in the end, hold out against society. If there is a 'message', if 3.13 has a functional role in the overall sequence of the *Amores*, it is, surely, to demonstrate this. The merest allusion here to Ovid's wife, the familial implications of this journey to her home-town, have a subtle impact on the agonized and psychologically acute poem (3.14) that follows. If wife and mistress are identical the irony is even more pervasive.

1–2 Falerii was a town in southern Etruria, north of Mt Soracte, near the confluence of the river Treia with the Tiber: its modern name is Civita Castellana. The old town stood on a high plateau about 1 km × 400 m in size, surrounded by steep river-gorges: Ovid's 'exhausting journey over mountain roads' is no exaggeration.

3–4 Epigraphical evidence indicates that the chief festival of Juno Quiritis (the derivation of this epithet remains uncertain) was held on 7 October. It is reasonable to identify the occasion described by Ovid with this celebration.

13–18 Heifers were the most common sacrifice to Hera or Juno. Those of Falerii were of a particularly pure white, which *ipso facto* increased their value for this purpose (Ovid *EP* 4.4.31–2, *Fast.* 1.83.4). Pigs (also

calves and rams) are almost equally common sacrificial animals.

18–20 This aetiological myth is not known elsewhere (though it was clearly adduced to explain some kind of scapegoat ritual, as lines 21–2 make clear). Hera's flight from Zeus is presumably to be related to the period before their marriage, when brother and sister became involved without their parents' knowledge, and, according to one odd tradition, Zeus turned himself into a cuckoo—no worse than a swan—to pursue his quarry: which, says Pausanias (2.17.4), is why the statue of Hera has a cuckoo perched on its sceptre.

31–5 Apropos the Argive origin of the Juno-cult at Falerii, Dionysius of Halicarnassus writes (1.21.2): '... the manner of the sacrificial ceremonies was similar, holy women served the sacred precinct, and an unmarried girl, called the *canephours* or 'basket-bearer', performed the initial rites of the sacrifices, and there were choruses of virgins who praised the goddess in the songs of their country'. About Halesus, the founder of Falerii, little is known. He was a companion (some said a bastard son) of Agamemnon. On Agamemnon's murder he fled from the Peloponnese and eventually settled in Etruria.

3.14

The basic message of this poem is simple enough, and can be summed up in two popular adages ('What the eye doesn't see the heart doesn't grieve over' and 'The Eleventh Commandment: Thou shalt not be found out'), the very familiarity of which suggests that Ovid's reaction was by no means as *outré* as critics seem to imply: cf. AA 2.387–408, with my note, p. 374. I'm a reasonable, broad-minded man, he says in effect. I can't control your private life—but must you flaunt it quite so openly under my nose? There is a certain social decorum in these matters. Be more discreet about your *billets-doux*. Make your bed when your previous lover has gone. Don't let me see the love-bites on your neck. I have no desire to probe your activities like a private detective; I'm more than ready to believe your cover-stories. But please at least take the trouble to make them convincing.

Humankind, as Eliot reminded us, cannot bear very much reality. This is Ovid at his most human. The affair with Corinna is clearly almost finished, but should we on that account regard 3.14 as a symbolic rejection of love-elegy as such?

Catullus, Propertius, Ovid: all three were hurt in love, each one adopts a different *persona* to deal with the raw truth of infidelity. Catullus (76.23–6) abandons any hope of Lesbia returning his passion, much less of her remaining faithful; all he prays for is a chance to exorcise his own desire, which he stigmatizes as 'this filthy disease' (*taetrum*

hunc... morbum). Propertius, with greater sophistication, protects himself by downgrading the importance of the relationship, and emphasizing the social *cachet* of smart promiscuity. Ovid, while equally alert to the claims of society—he seems at least as much worried by Corinna’s vulgar public exhibitionism as by her indifference to *him*—nevertheless shows his feelings in a way that comes rather closer to Catullus—and more than once echoes him: with lines 1ff. cf. Cat. 76.23–4, and with lines 25–6, Cat. 6.7–11. Nothing will ever tempt this poet into displays of raw emotionalism: yet 3.14 is, in its way, a *cri de cœur*. A short envoi apart, 3.14 is the final poem of the *Amores*. Ovid could forgive, but Corinna, all too clearly, forgot. A phase in his life, and his poetry, was over: the two were more closely interwoven than modern criticism will allow. No accident that in this poem he figures simultaneously as judge, prosecutor and defender (again, with a sprinkling of quasi-legal terminology): nothing could better highlight the ambivalence of his attitude.

3.15

With a flurry of conventional periphrastic imagery, Ovid announces his final decision (hinted at on several earlier occasions, e.g. *Am.* 2.18.1–4, 13–14, and 3.1 *passim*) to abandon elegiac love-poetry in favour of the tragic Muse (cf. my note on *Am.* 2.18.1–3, p. 307). The tragedy in question, on which he had begun work earlier, but laid aside (*Am.* 2.18.13–14), was his *Medea*: the only tragedy he ever wrote, praised to the skies by Tacitus and Quintilian, and now, ironically enough, lost. Despite Ovid’s talk about a new start, his subject was once more love and jealousy, though now on a heroic scale; and his renunciation of elegy looks a little specious when we recall how soon he was to begin work on the *Art of Love* (see above, pp. 38–9). However, for the moment at least he believed in his own new programme; and it is arguable (though not susceptible of proof) that what finally drove him into tragedy, and dictated his choice of theme, was his break with Corinna. When the elegist reappears, moreover, his literary *persona* has changed. He is no longer the poet-lover, but *praeceptor amoris*, a professor of seduction. The practitioner has turned to teaching.

This envoi also contains a brief but intriguing autobiographical section, which emphasizes Ovid’s respectable provincial pedigree (in sharp contrast to those new equestrians who had done well out of the Civil Wars: see *Am.* 3.8 *passim*, and my introductory note, pp. 322ff.), praises the rugged independence of his Paelignian ancestors, and uses Paelignian *libertas* to excuse or justify his rather daring erotic poems. Conventional poetic self-advertisement here goes hand-in-hand with a somewhat unexpected local pride. Where, now, is Ovid’s *urbanitas*?

‘Freedom with honour’ can apply to poetry and politics alike: Ovid clearly means the two concepts to merge in the image he presents. For further biographical details see Introd., pp. 15ff.

4 ‘A man whose delights have never let him down’: I have attempted here to catch the studied ambiguity of the original (*nee me deliciae dedecueret meae*), an ambiguity unnoticed, as far as I can tell, by all commentators. *Deliciae* can mean (i) sensuality, (ii) light verse, and (iii) darling. The meaning everyone attaches to the line is something like, ‘My poems may be erotic, but I’m respectable.’ This is certainly one possible interpretation. But the verb *dedecet* can convey the notion of ‘unbecomingness’ as well as ‘dishonour’, and the range of possible meanings for the line is startling: ‘My girlfriend was quite smart enough for me,’ ‘my elegies lived up to my reputation,’ ‘my sensuality never let me down,’ and so on. Surely Ovid, with mischievous skill, went for this ambiguous effect deliberately?

THE ART OF LOVE

BOOK 1

1–40 These introductory lines, the so called ‘proem’ and *partitio*, are rightly recognized as an important statement of Ovid’s intentions for the whole work. Finesse, technique–*ars*, Greek *téchnē*—this is what Ovid, as *praeceptor amoris*, has to teach (1–2). Love-making is a sport open to all, but its transformation into an art requires special knowledge. The didactic stance Ovid adopts links this skill to the honest arts of human society: navigation, chariot-racing, sailing (3–4) and, later, hunting or farming. The first three in particular—besides having appropriate erotic connotations in their metaphorical use—call for *expert control*; by analogy with those mythical embodiments of specialized expertise, Tiphys and Automedon, Ovid proclaims himself uniquely qualified to control love (5–8), and suggests that the passions are amenable to such control.

Indeed, the first thing that strikes one is his self-confidence, and, linked with this, the absence of a formal divine invocation to open the poem—in sharp contrast to Virgil’s *Georgics*, or even to the anti-religious *De Rerum Natura* of Lucretius. This attitude is reinforced by Ovid’s careful disclaimer (25–30): his work is based on experience, not on divine inspiration, and the appeal to Venus is perfunctory rather than climactic. The images of Chiron moulding Achilles (11–16) and of bulls or horses being broken in for domestic use (19–20) stress the fact that Ovid is presenting himself, Chiron-like, as a purveyor of *cultus*, of civilized instruction. They also hint at the attitude he will take to love, and by extension to women, as something wild, unpredictable, immature, yet ultimately malleable: a case of

civilization v. nature, well expressed in terms of those agricultural metaphors which abound throughout the poems.

At lines 31–40 (the *partitio*) Ovid outlines his general plan. It is noteworthy that—in contrast to what we might have been led to suppose by parts of the *Amores*—the affairs resulting from these pick-ups and seductions *are meant to last* (38), though briefer liaisons also rate a mention (92). Book 2, in fact, is devoted (cf. lines 11–14) to techniques for keeping a girl once you have won her. Book 1, meanwhile, is divided into two main sections after the proem and general proposal: (a) a description of the best places—almost all in Rome—to acquire a mistress (41–262): the colonnades, foreign temples, the theatres and Circus, triumphal processions, dinner-parties, coastal spas and, oddly, the secluded woodland shrine of Diana near Aricia; (b) after a short bridging passage (263–8), the remainder of Bk 1, apart from a postscript and envoi (755–72), is devoted to various ploys and techniques—some naïve, some subtle—for gaining a lady's favours. All women, ultimately, can be won, Ovid says (a theme to which he recurs several times). Their maids must be cultivated—but not, for preference, seduced. Don't let them con you into giving them expensive presents. Soften them up with love-letters, use words persuasively. Be clean in your toilet, but not effeminate. Don't drink too much at dinner—in fact, pretend you've drunk more than you have, it makes a good cover and excuse. Promise anything: lovers' oaths don't count. Use tears; if necessary, use violence. Look pale and thin to prove your sincerity.

5–6 Tiphys was the helmsman of Argo on the voyage in search of the Golden Fleece. The choice of imagery is suggestive: both charioteer and helmsman evoke the picture of *skilled mastery*—over the elements in one case, and horses in the other. 'Control' and 'technique' are Ovid's watchwords, and the approach (besides highlighting its author's spoof-didactic structure) is suggestive as regards his fundamental attitude to women in this poem.

19–20 We meet here a metaphor, that drawn from the breaking-in of horses and cattle, which is central to Ovid's purpose and recurs throughout this poem: e.g. in Bk 1 alone at lines 43–50, 93–6, 277–82, 360, 471–2, 755–72.

25–30 Ovid's credibility as expert (*artifex*) is rooted in personal experience: he does not rely on supernatural enlightenment, whether from Apollo, or prophetic birds or an epiphany of the Muses as described by Hesiod. This deliberate rejection of divine guidance in favour of experience underwrites his credibility.

35–40 Ovid's descriptive programme of contents, or *partitio*—a regular

feature of serious Roman didactic poetry—refers only to the contents of Bks 1 (finding and wooing a mistress) and 2 (keeping her once won): this lends some support to the theory—cf. my note on AA 2.733–46, p. 381—which sees Bk 3 as an afterthought or later addition to the original scheme. The pursuit of love as *militia* (36–7) is an image already familiar to us from the *Amores* (see esp. 1.9, with my introductory note p.279), and Ovid develops it further in Bk 2 of the *Ars* (233ff., with my note, p. 370; 559, 565–6, 674). The charioteer image (39–40) is, similarly, not unknown in the *Amores* (e.g. at 3.15.2), and has strong erotic associations (3.2), but achieves its maximum effect in the *Ars* as a symbol of technical skill and control (above, lines 5–6 with my note ad loc., cf. AA 2.425ff., 727ff., etc.). Line 39 is adapted from the Roman custom of driving a plough round the site of a future city, so that Ovid is marking out the bounds of his subject-matter.

43–50 The use of hunting, fowling or fishing metaphors—conventional for erotic purposes, but just why deserves some scrutiny—also serves to point up a presumptive contrast between male ‘rational’ initiative and female ‘instinctual’ reactions: the lover as hunter deploys a range of suitable techniques to bring down his quarry. See, e.g., AA 1.89, 253, 269–70, 391–3, 763–6; 2.185–92; 3.425–8, 591–2, 669–70.

53–4 For the rescue of Andromeda by Perseus from the prospective attentions of a sea-monster, see my note to Am. 3.3.17–18(p. 315). The ‘coloured Indies’ here probably refers to Ethiopia. What, we may wonder, has the victim chained to her rock in common with Helen, the all-too-willing adulteress? The answer would seem to be, nothing: Ovid’s only concern with these two episodes, apart from incidental decoration, is the fact that Perseus and Paris both went far out of their way—in the most literal sense—to get what they could have found at Rome simply by crossing the street.

55–60 This survey employs a favourite rhetorical device of Ovid’s, *variatio*, the ornamental decorative accumulation of detail. There is also a sly attack on the clichés of official patriotism then current. At one stroke patriotism is subverted by Ovid’s private erotic fancy. Worse still, we are reminded (line 60) that Augustus’ mythical ancestor, pious Aeneas, was traditionally not only the son of Venus, by Anchises, but also Cupid’s half-brother (a joke Ovid had previously deployed at Am, 1.2.51–2, again in a political context: see my note, p. 270).

57 Gargara was a high spur of Mt Ida in the Troad, haunted by wild beasts, famous for the richness of its crops, and the scene of that famous cloud-covered passage of love between Zeus and Hera (Homer *Il.* 14.292ff.). The wine of Methymna, a delightful town on the north-

west coast of Lesbos, was much praised in (antiquity. Today—*experto crede*—it is something of an acquired taste.

67–74 Among all the Roman locales which Ovid recommends as profitable hunting-grounds for young men after an easy pick-up, the porticoes and colonnades, mostly of recent construction, take pride of place. The list given here is repeated (with the addition of Agrippa's Porticus Argonautarum and the Theatre of Marcellus) at AA 3.389–96, in a passage addressed to the women themselves (see my note, p. 392). The Danaids' Portico is twice alluded to in the *Amores* (2.2.3–4; 3.1.60–62), while colonnades in general recur later in the present book of the *Ars* (491ff.: either the Danaids' or Pompey's portico may be meant here. To a Roman reader these landmarks, as depicted by Ovid, must have conveyed a sense not only of familiarity—the urban milieu of Rome is crucial to the *Ars*—but also of shock, offset for some by irreverent delight.

Augustus, as we know from his *Res Gestae* (4.19–21, cf. Suet. *Div. Aug.* 28.2), took great pride in the fact that he had 'found Rome brick and left it marble'. Yet for Ovid all this pomp and circumstance, these colonnades, theatres and temples have one function and one only: to serve as a stage on which the pursuit of women may be conveniently conducted.

75–6 Meetings at religious festivals were popular, both in Greece and in Rome, these being among the few occasions on which young unmarried girls were allowed out in public.

77–8 For the cult of Isis in Rome see my notes to *Am.* 1.8.73–4, and esp. 2.2.25–6 (p. 292). The identification of Zeus' ex-mistress Io with Isis was due to her presence in Egypt while metamorphosed into a heifer. See my notes to *Am.* 1.3.21–4 (p. 271) and 2.2.44–6 (p. 292).

79–88 Ovid never passes up a chance (cf. lines 585–8 below) to ridicule the pretensions of lawyers and legal terminology: cf. also *Am.* 1.4.35–40 (with my note, p. 272), 1.15.5–6 and 2.5.29–32. The double meanings in this passage, based on nuances of legal jargon, are almost impossible to convey in translation.

89–92 Ovid frequently refers to the theatre as a promising venue for pick-ups and assignations: see, beside the present passage, *Am.* 2.2.26, 2.7.3–4; A4 1.497–502; 3–329–32, 394, 633; RA 751–6, where it is suggested that music and dancing act as an aphrodisiac. 101–34 In a delectable parody of the aetiological-type poem designed to explain some traditional myth, Ovid produces his own idiosyncratic reason for the theatre's popularity as a seducers' bunting-ground: it all started with Romulus and the rape of the Sabine women! This not only mocks the Romans' fondness for *mos maiorum* (ancestral

tradition) and the tendency to seek historical precedent for their actions; it is also, in more ways than one, a dig at Augustus. Romulus was much touted by the Princeps as the founder of Roman greatness; at one point he had even considered taking Romulus' name. Ovid bluntly presents this revered, if misty, ancestral figure as the instigator of civil war (*Fast.* 3.202) and mass rape. He is also making fun of that censorious puritanism which regarded the theatre as a hotbed of vice—and thus, again, mocking Augustus, who in 18 BC had legislated to keep men and women separate in the auditorium.

At 129–32 Ovid both dramatizes, and subtly mocks, the traditional reassurances made to the girls by Romulus that the rape was with a view to marriage—a popular seducer's gambit—and that their new husbands would, *inter alia*, replace home and parents. The notion of the girl as spoil or booty of course fits in very well with the general pattern, not only of the *An* (cf. 2.406,743–4; 3.759f.), but of love-elegy as *militia amoris* (cf. *Am.* 1.2.19ff., 1.7.33–40 and elsewhere).

135–62 This whole passage, as has often been noted, represents a mock-didactic reworking of *Am.* 3.2, with which it merits close comparison. Ovid, far more than his elegiac predecessors, developed and repeated material—ideas, words, phrases, motifs—not only from other poets, but also from his own earlier work. Repetition on the present scale, however (like the revamping at lines 565ff.—see below, p. 356—of *Am.* 1.4.1–58), is more properly regarded as *variatio*: the differences are at least as important as the similarities. *Am.* 3.2 (see my introductory note, pp. 311ff.) is a self-contained dramatic monologue, whereas the present, much shorter sequence forms one item only in a list of the various preserves where women, like big game, may be found and hunted down. Ovid's colourful first-person narrative is replaced by a series of brisk protreptic injunctions.

163–70 From the races Ovid turns his attention to gladiatorial combats. These were not *ludi* but *muñera*, i.e., originally, funerary rites in honour of the dead; and not Roman, but an Etruscan import that found its way to the Urbs by way of Campania. Such *muñera* are recorded as early as 264 BC; by the end of the Republic they had become wholly secularized, and immensely popular. Observe with what skill Ovid uses the bloody image of the arena to intensify a tired conventional metaphor—Cupid's darts (cf. *Am.* 1.2.71ff. and elsewhere) piercing the susceptible male heart. The carefree seducer is instantly metamorphosed into a dying Gaul.

171–6 The 'naval mock-battle' took place on 1 August 2 BC—a *terminus post quern* for the poem's final draft—in what afterwards became the 'grove of the Caesars' below the Janiculum. It was a re-enactment of the Battle of Salamis, in which no less than 3,000 combatants took

part, exclusive of rowers. The occasion—which Ovid ignores—was the dedication by Augustus of the temple of Mars the Avenger (*Ultor*) in the new Forum Augusti, in fulfilment of a vow made at Philippi. The Princeps took great pride in this spectacle; yet Ovid dismisses it in a single couplet (171–2), and only regards it as noteworthy because of the huge crowds—girls in particular—that it drew from the entire Roman world. Nor, alas, was it, in his view, the spectacle that attracted them, but the matchless opportunities for sexual adventure.

177–228 Gaius Caesar (b. 20 BC) was the eldest son of Agrippa and Julia, the daughter of Augustus—who, when the boy was three, adopted him with a view to securing the succession. In 1 BC he married, and, as consul-designate, with proconsular powers, was sent out East. His ostensible mission was to settle local problems in Parthia and Armenia, whence (with the encouragement and assistance of the Parthians) a pro-Roman client-king had been expelled. He was also meant to ‘display the heir apparent’ in regions which had seen neither Augustus nor his nominees for over a decade.

Just over a year later Gaius was wounded during a minor skirmish in Armenia. His health broke down, and on 21 February AD 4 he died at Limyra in Lycia, during the voyage back to Italy. With his death Augustus’ last hopes for a planned succession were destroyed, and he was forced—wholly against his will—to adopt the embittered Tiberius as his heir-designate.

In retrospect (that is, after AD 4) the entire passage must have been acutely embarrassing to anyone with even a moderately ‘official’ outlook. Gaius, far from basking in the glory of a well-earned triumph, was dead. Nor (*pace* RA 155–6) had he been killed at the climax of a glorious campaign. He succumbed to a lingering wound inflicted in dubious circumstances, and possibly not even on the battlefield, but during some highly unromantic shuttle-diplomacy. The poetic prophecies had been proved false, the hyperbolic flattery had turned sour. The whole passage stood as an unforgettable—and surely unforgotten—testament to the hollowness of Augustan literary propaganda (cf. below, my note on 199ff., P. 345), a permanent reminder to the Princeps himself of the bright hopes that had finally been laid to rest in Gaius’ grave. The most significant fact about these lines is, surely, that Ovid let them stand unmodified, even after time had made a mockery of their message.

179–80 M. Licinius Crassus, a member (with Caesar and Pompey) of the First Triumvirate, whose immense wealth was only matched by his ambition, in 53 BC undertook a Parthian expedition—mainly to improve his military reputation *vis-à-vis* those of his two more famous colleagues. At Carrhae, beyond the Euphrates, his force was wiped

out, he himself (together with his son Publius, one of Caesar's best lieutenants in Gaul) was killed—according to one account, by having molten gold poured down his throat—and the legions' standards were captured. Not until 20 BC were these spoils of war recovered, when Augustus, by putting effective diplomatic pressure on King Phraates, got back not only Crassus' lost standards, but those of Mark Antony as well.

181ff. Gaius was sent to the East as soon as he had celebrated his twentieth birthday. We should remember that Augustus (or Octavian, as he then was) had himself held a command when he was even younger: the compliment was two-edged in more ways than one, since Octavian had the reputation of falling sick whenever a major battle had to be fought.

187–90 That true heroism and *savoir-faire* are not incompatible with extreme youth (at least in certain rare cases) Ovid affects to demonstrate by two mythical *exempla*, (i) After Hercules' birth (eight or ten months later: accounts differ) Hera, in jealousy, sent a pair of snakes to kill the child in its cradle, whereupon Hercules strangled them both with his bare hands, (ii) The youthful Bacchus (Dionysus) traversed the whole of India with his followers, overcoming all opposition and teaching the inhabitants the cultivation of the vine. These parallels are suggestive, in that the two examples selected were (a) demi-gods (b) precocious and (c) achieved divinity through their benefits to mankind. Both were great conquerors, and Bacchus, furthermore, had triumphed in the East.

191–2 This is a singularly ambivalent couplet. Whose years, and luck, does Ovid have in mind? We are forcibly reminded that the boy's true—as opposed to adoptive—father was the great Agrippa, who not only far eclipsed Augustus as a general, but on occasion had to finish off the younger man's work for him (e.g. in Spain: see my note to *Am.* 1.2.51–2, p. 270). Even at Actium it was Agrippa who did all the real work.

193–4 'So great a name': that of Caesar, in this instance as embodied by his adopted great-nephew Augustus. 'Prince of the youths' (*princeps iuuentutis*) was a title bestowed by Augustus on both Gaius and his brother Lucius when each assumed the *toga virilis* of manhood. In Gaius' case this was in 5 BC; Lucius' turn came three years later. Both were also admitted to the Senate, and Gaius was designated consul for AD 1. Lucius, like Gaius, died young, succumbing in AD 2 while on his way to Spain: many believed that Livia, Augustus' wife, had had them both poisoned to clear the way to the succession for her own son Tiberius. Tomorrow of their seniors' is a clear hint at the title of 'Leader of the Senate' (*princeps senatus*) which Augustus himself held,

and suggests, tactfully, eventual succession to Augustus' position.

195–6 This is a difficult couplet to interpret. Phraates IV of Parthia had a son, Phraataces, by an Italian slave-girl. This woman intrigued to win her son the throne, and persuaded the king to send his four legitimate sons to Rome as hostages. Since Gaius has brothers (Lucius and Agrippa Postumus), Ovid argues, he will appreciate the wrong done to these Parthian hostage-princes, now supplanted by their scheming half-brother. Since he has a father (Augustus) he will appreciate the rights of *their* father (Phraates IV) to choose which of his sons should succeed him—even though, *bien entendu*, that son reached the throne prematurely, by parricide. There is an uncomfortable similarity between this story and the rumours circulating about Livia—or, indeed, the ambiguity implicit in the reference to Gaius' father (see above, my note on 191–2). Ovid was a subtle and sophisticated man: he is more likely, here as elsewhere, to have been guilty of sly political malice than of naivety. The digression on Gaius, ironically enough, despite its fulsome flattery, must have caused more irritation in the Imperial household—for one reason and another—than almost anything else Ovid wrote.

198 The enemy who won his throne by parricide was Phraataces (see above), subsequently Phraates V, of Parthia, who murdered his father, Phraates IV, in April 2 BC, being impatient to succeed.

199–202 Echoes of Propertius' reference to the Parthian campaign (4.6.79–84) alert us—if such warning were needed—to the fact that Ovid here is laying on the clichés with a parodie trowel. The Roman javelin is pitted, symbolically, against the Parthian arrow.

203ff. What we have here is a partial *propemptikon* (prayer for the traveller's safety; offering promised for his return; anticipation of festivities when that return is accomplished). For a fuller discussion of the genre see my introductory note to *Am.* 2.11, pp. 299–300.

213ff. It is interesting to compare this triumphal procession with that of Love in *Am.* 1.2.23–52, and indeed with official Roman practice generally. The use of four white horses to draw the victor's chariot seems to have been initiated by Caesar, but soon became customary. The captives that adorned the procession were normally led off to prison and execution before it reached the Capitol. Floats drew representations of conquered mountains and rivers, or battle-scenes.

229–52 The generic notion of a dinner-party or banquet, where men and women reclined together, as a suitable venue for seduction is familiar to us from the *Amores* (1.4 and 2.5, *passim*), and recurs at *AA* 1.565ff., 3.749ff. We may note, however, that each of these passages in the *Ars* also contains a highly specific warning against the

incidental risks of inebriation. Ovid, like the Poner in *Macbeth*, was well aware that while heavy drinking may provoke desire, it also seriously diminishes performance (AA 1.233), *not* to mention impairing judgement (AA 1.243ff., 507–8, 3.753–4), causing quarrels (AA 1.591ff.), and making the drinker unattractive (AA 3.765–6). At the same time, drunkenness *in others* can be exploited to some advantage, by both men and women (AA 1.241–4, 3.753–4, cf. *Am.* 1.4.51–2), while to feign intoxication oneself (AA 1.597ff., cf. *Am.* 2.5.13ff.) often disarms opposition. Wine is thus an ambiguous element in the game.

237–48 The tribute to wine (especially in an erotic context) is conventional. So, in a sense, is the contrast between lamplight (fallacious) and daylight (revealing). It is, however, worth recalling in this context that though the Judgement of Paris (247–8) was conducted in broad daylight, all three goddesses offered Paris a bribe, and that the inducement put up by Venus (Aphrodite) was the seduction of Helen.

249–52 It is instructive to compare these warning lines with AA 3.753–4, where women are told exactly the same thing—but there as a useful device for helping Plain Jane to catch a lover. Once again it is significant that women are placed, almost by definition, in the same category (251–2) as luxury merchandise.

255–8 Baiae lay on the coast in the sheltered Bay of Puteoli, near Misenum, and due west of Neapolis (Naples). Its original attraction lay in its climate, its thermal springs, and its delightful scenery. Many wealthy persons built villas here, including Marius, Lucullus, Pompey and Caesar. Like many luxury seaside spas, it very soon became a by-word for dissipation and immorality. The joke at 257–8 depends on the fact that some sulphur-springs were thought to be therapeutic for wounds, but here the man who came for a cure leaves with a different sort of trauma.

259–62 The ‘woodland shrine’ sacred to Diana was situated by a small lake, the modern Lago di Nemi, on the forest-clad lower slopes of the Alban Hills, about three miles from Aricia. (Aricia itself was the first way-station from Rome towards Brindisi, some sixteen miles down the Via Appia.) It was most famous, or notorious, for its slave-priest, the so-called ‘King of the Grove’ (*Rex Nemorensis*), who took office by killing his predecessor, after challenging him by plucking a bough from the sacred precinct. However, Ovid may well be referring to another ceremony, the torch-race run by women to the shrine from the city. This ritual offered ample opportunity for casual dalliance to those who ignored Diana’s example of virginity: Ovid suggests that if they ‘got hurt’ in consequence, this was due to the goddess’s anger.

263–8 These lines form a bridge between the first main topic of Bk 1 (where to find girls) and the second (how to catch them when found): the recapitulation, coupled with Ovid's use here of his favourite hunting metaphor, once again suggests that he is parodying serious didactic poetry as a genre.

269ff. The ultimate seducibility of all women is a point to which Ovid recurs several times in Bk 1: see, e.g., lines 343–8, 471–8, 485–6. This general proposition, especially if considered in a didactic context, has to be universally valid: we cannot–nor, despite his earlier disclaimers (in particular, at 31–4), did Ovid intend that we should–assume that upper-class Roman wives, by definition, are to be excluded from what follows. Indeed, the mythological *exempla* chosen almost all dwell, to a striking degree, on *adultery*: see esp. vv. 295, 301–2, 304, 309, 311 327, 333–8, 341–4 (cf. 2.543–6, 3.643–4). Lines 271–4, besides repeating the imagery of the chase, offer a good instance of the rhetorical *adynaton*, or argument from comparative impossibility: sooner will X (generally something against the natural order) happen than Y (the immediate matter in hand).

277–82 Ovid's concept of the female nature as wild, uncontrollable, and passionate in an animal sense is repeated later (AA 2.372–86); this helps to dramatize the dominant image of her male pursuer (but see lines 704ff. and my note pp. 360–61). He is not only a hunter, but also an agriculturalist and stockman. Whereas the male sexual instinct is controlled, that of women (281) is 'rabid'. To drive this point home, there follow no less than ten mythological illustrations (283–340) of excessive, and illicit, feminine passion. If women are like *that*, Ovid implies, how can a man, any man, fail to get his way with them?

283–8 Various versions of the myth of Byblis are known, but one constant feature in them all is the incestuous passion she nursed for her brother Caunus–or *vice versa*. When Caunus fled to Lycia, Byblis either hanged herself from grief, or was metamorphosed into a stream or fountain. Ovid tells the story in much greater detail in his *Metamorphoses* (9.446–664). Myrrha, or Smyrna, was the daughter of Thias, king of Assyria, with whom she was doomed by Aphrodite to have an incestuous relationship: he did not recognize her until it was too late (Ovid *Met.* 10.298ff.). He then pursued her with a drawn sword; but she prayed to be made invisible, and the gods turned her into a myrrh-tree. The oozing drops of gum from the tree's bark were thought to be her tears. In due course Myrrha-the-tree burst open and gave birth to Adonis.

289ff. Why is so much space–no less than 38 lines–devoted to the story of Minos' aberrant wife Pasiphaë in Ovid's catalogue? Ovid may be genuinely fascinated by the myth, which he treats as an

Alexandrian motif, a working out in psychopathic terms of ‘the feminine libido gone beyond all bounds’. The fascination is undoubtedly there, since Ovid later returns to the act, and its various consequences, in extended *mythoi* dealing not only with Ariadne (AA 1.525ff.) but also with Daedalus (AA 2.21ff.), whose ingenious wooden cow facilitated Pasiphaë’s miscegenation. It is also worth noting how close the imagery is to that of Am. 3.5; if the earlier poem is in fact Ovidian, this could suggest another, more personal reason for treating Pasiphaë’s story at length in a context discussing uncontrollable female sexuality. The fruit of this contrived miscegenation was, of course, the Minotaur. Mt Ida (289) is the central massif of the long Cretan range, snow-capped for much of the year, and associated with various legends concerning Zeus.

297–8 For the tradition concerning Cretans as congenital liars, see my note on Am. 3.10.19–24, p. 328.

299–336 We have here a classic example of Ovid’s penchant for exploiting the potentially ludicrous elements in a myth; yet his treatment is, at the same time, undeniably horrific, in a style that recalls Bosch or Goya, since Pasiphaë, with her gown and mirror in the meadow, may be a figure of fun, but is nevertheless quite capable of murdering her ‘rivals’ and ripping out their entrails with her bare hands (319–20). Despite this, Ovid contrives to mock the whole notion of her taurine *mésalliance* by means of sly visual juxtapositions, so that the overall effect is one of harmless grotesquerie—like the ‘Dance of the Hours’ in Disney’s *Fantasia*—with disturbing undertones. An extra dimension is created by the fact that Pasiphaë’s disposal of the herd’s more attractive cows can be paralleled, in human terms, from Greek tragedy.

327–30 Aerope, the wife of Atreus, committed adultery with his brother Thyestes. When Atreus discovered Aerope’s infidelity, he killed three of Thyestes’ children, invited him to a banquet, and served them up to him for dinner. According to one tradition, which became very popular with the Roman poets—Ovid alludes to it again at *Tr.* 2.391ff.—it was in horror at this act of murder and cannibalism that the Sun reversed his course over Mycenae, setting in the east rather than the west.

331–40 Ovid’s list of mythological crimes ‘prompted by woman’s lust’ (341) continues with Scylla, daughter of Nisus, King of Megara. Having fallen in love with Minos, who was besieging Megara with his fleet, Scylla pulled out the purple lock, or hair, on which her father’s life (according to an oracle) depended. Nisus duly died, and Scylla betrayed Megara to Minos. This did her little good: when Minos had secured Megara, he slung Scylla by the heels down from the stern of

his ship, and drowned her. Agamemnon's murder at the hands of Clytemnestra and her lover Aegisthus is familiar from Homer and many other sources. After Jason and Medea (335–6) had lived in Corinth for some while, Creon, the King of Corinth, persuaded Jason to divorce Medea in order to marry Creon's own daughter, Creusa (she is more commonly referred to as Glauce). Medea first sent her prospective replacement a poisoned robe, which burnt her up when put on, and then murdered her own two children by Jason. Phoenix (337) was accused by his father Amyntor's mistress, Phthia, of having seduced her; according to Homer the charge was true, and Phoenix had been urged into the act by his jealous mother; there is no mention of Amyntor blinding his son in punishment. When Theseus, mistakenly, believed his son Hippolytus guilty of adultery with the boy's stepmother, Phaedra, he cursed him, and Poseidon sent a bull from the sea that scared the horses of Hippolytus' chariot, so that they stampeded, the chariot was smashed up, and Hippolytus, tangled in the reins, was dragged to death. A similar false accusation of seduction was made to Phineus (339–40) concerning his two sons, again by their stepmother, Idaea or Idothea. Phineus, like Amyntor in similar circumstances, apparently blinded them both.

341–50 The cumulative impact of Ovid's cautionary tales leaves us with no more than a secondary impression of the lust involved; what really sticks in the mind is that lethal parade of malice, perversion, perjury, jealousy and revengeful violence, up to and including murder. Hell, in fact, hath no fury like a woman scorned: let any would-be seducer take warning (cf. AA 2.38711., and, in a quieter vein, below, lines 365ff.). Yet, in the passage that follows, our *praeceptor amaris* makes a quite different point. Observe, he says the intensity of the female sexual urge. No woman can resist a man's advances—or even if she does, she will find the attention *per se* enjoyable. Besides, novelty has its own built-in attractions, and our neighbour's fields and flocks always look more enticing than our own—a thought as seductive in antiquity as today. Here we discern a re-statement of Ovid's much-emphasized claim (*Am.* 2. 19 and 3.4, with my introd. note to the latter, pp. 315–16) that 'what's allowed is a bore, it's what isn't / That turns me on'. If sex can drive women to murder, no man equipped with the appropriate *ars*, or technique, should have any trouble getting them into bed.

351ff. The various advantages and disadvantages of having one's mistress's personal maid—generally her coiffeuse—privy to the intrigue are examined (from a more involved standpoint) in the *Amores*: see esp. *Am.* 1.11, 1.12, 2.7 and 2.8. Her obvious function is as go-between, a bearer of messages (*Am.* 1.1 1.3–8) and interpreter of

moods (ibid. 17–18). She can also—for whatever ulterior purpose—become sexually involved herself with her lady’s lover, or would-be lover (*Am.* 2.7.17ff., 2.8 *passim*; cf. my notes ad loc.). The dangers of this practice are set out in the present passage (37sff.) in a cool and rational manner—though by AA 2.2siff. Ovid has quite forgotten them, and is recommending the cultivation of madam’s personal servants with unqualified enthusiasm. Readers of the *Amores* will also recall, with amusement, Ovid’s anxious protestations, 911a lover, to Corinna (2.7.19ÍF.) on the awkward occasion that so clearly influenced his ultra-cautious line (375ff.) as *praeceptor amoris* thereafter. Indeed, in Bk 3 (663–6), while discussing the problem of jealousy between women, he openly admits his personal involvement.

360 Note the characteristic agricultural image, designed to enhance Ovid’s concept of women as fundamentally akin to cows or wheatfields: a natural phenomenon to be tamed, cultivated, ploughed in season and, ultimately, harvested: see below, 755–8, and frequently in Bk 2 (e.g. 322, 513, 667–8). At 391–4 the image of hunting (or fishing, or fowling) is used to describe a seducer’s dealings with the maid if he decides to claim her favours as well as those of her mistress.

363–4 The image here is abruptly changed to one which Ovid often employs elsewhere: that of a beleaguered town, with its easily interchangeable military and sexual symbolism. See, e.g., *Am.* 1.9.19–20, where an explicit parallel is drawn between the ‘gates’ and ‘threshold’ of girl and city. While the cliché of the *exclusus amatar* can render this image officially innocuous, its sexual implications remain clear.

399ff. The notion of ordering life and nature through traditional social, practical and religious rules—doing the right thing at the right time—was central to the didactic tradition. The very title of Hesiod’s *Works and Days* embodied it, and it recurs throughout the *Georgics* of Virgil. Several scholars have pointed out that these lines, with their allusions to farming, sailing, and star-lore, are fundamentally parodie. There are echoes of Hesiod, Virgil, even Aratus. But the real joke—to which the reader has been alerted by these touchstones—is the frivolous application of a serious didactic formula to the tactics of seduction. Just as sowing or sailing are best avoided at certain seasons, Ovid argues (339–402), so there are ill-omened days for the pursuit of women. The motif is already familiar from the *Amores* (see esp. 1.10 *passim*, and 1.8.87–100). Ovidian women go to great lengths to wheedle expensive gifts out of their lovers, and this *quid pro quo* attitude comes in for heavy criticism. Since the lover-poet’s own presents offer cachet rather than cash (*Am.* 1.3.25–6, 1.8.61–2,

1.10.59–62, 2.17.27, 2.17.27, 3.8.1–8) he is more vulnerable than most to gold-digging in a woman, attacks it resentfully, and here—as *praeceptor amoris*—offers hints on how best to side-step the various most obvious pitfalls. We may note, wily, that things clearly have not changed all that much in two millennia. Then as now, birthdays and Christmas (or the equivalent) formed the major hazards: new taboo days to add to the old Hesiodic calendar or the rich Roman assortment of *dies nefasti*.

405–6 The ‘feast of Venus’ mentioned here, celebrated on 1 April, seems to have been a joint festival associated with Venus Verticordia (as ‘Changer of Hearts’) and Fortuna Virilis. In honour of the latter women attended the men’s baths; the celebration was also open to courtesans, and clearly originated as a fertility-cult. Venus Verticordia was given her first temple in 114 BC (as the result of an injunction taken from the Sibylline Books) after three Vestal Virgins had been found guilty of incest: she was worshipped by upper-class women. However, no other source suggests that this was a day for giving presents; and the suspicion that Ovid may, once again, be poking fun at respectable ladies gains considerable support from the phrase ‘in conjunction with Mars’. On 1 March was celebrated the Matronalia, a feast linked with Juno Lucina (as goddess of childbirth) and the birth of Mars: a notable feature of this festival was the giving of presents to *wives by their husbands*. Clearly Ovid is hinting at both dates: adulterers, no less than the fancy-free, are to beware of exploitation.

407–8 The reference here is to the midwinter festival of the Saturnalia, which began on 17 December and continued for between three and seven days of public holiday. The most famous feature of this festival was the reversal of roles between masters and slaves; but equally traditional—a tradition that still survives today—was the giving of presents, known as *apophoreta*. Martial, in Bk 14 of his *Epigrams*, provides a fascinating survey of such gifts, for which he wrote accompanying verses. Medicine chests, backscratchers, socks, comforters, woolly slippers, table-games, gold-inlaid dishes—the list recalls every popular Christmas catalogue. Originally such gifts had consisted only of *sigillaria*, small images made from earthenware or pastry; but little by little the occasion became more commercialized, the presents increasingly expensive: a familiar story.

409–12 The seven stars of the Pleiads had their heliacal rising in May, while their cosmical setting in November (between the 8th and 9th of the month) heralded not only the sowing season, but also the end of sailing for the year and the onset of winter storms. Bad weather, similarly, is associated with the Kid’s setting: it was, in general, regarded as a stormy constellation. At line 412 Ovid’s use of the

phrase 'dismembered vessel' (*naufraga membra ratis*) strongly suggests erotic no less than maritime failure. *Membrum*, like various other words in Ovid's vocabulary (e.g. *testis*, *nerous*, *latus*, *coire*, *miscere*, *surgere*, *cadere*, *iacere*) is commonly exploited for suggestive double entendre: see my notes on lines 631–6, p. 358 and AA 3.398, p. 394.

413–6 The best days on which to pursue the business of seduction, says Ovid, with exemplary logic, are those on which the shops are shut, and presents therefore unobtainable. His first example might have been deliberately chosen to annoy officialdom: 18 July, a day of national mourning, a *dies ater*, the anniversary of Rome's crushing defeat by the Gauls under Brennus (390 BC) on the banks of the Allia, which led to the city's sack and capture. No public business could ever be transacted on this day, so a lover was reasonably safe from financial demands then. The same applied to the Jewish Sabbath, which—at least as far as doing business went—was now observed by many Gentiles in Rome.

417–8 These lines, together with 429–30, remind us of the old bawd's advice in *Am.* 1.8.93–4, recommending a birthday as a good occasion for dunning prospective lovers. Presents, a party, a cake—all were obligatory.

419–24 Not only Ovid (*Am.* 1.10) but also Tibullus emphasizes the persistent and ingenious rapacity displayed by the gold-diggers of his day. Propertius, too, bitterly taunts Cynthia with her insatiable greed for gifts. The door-to-door pedlar (*institor*) not only supplied these demands; he was also, like the modern commercial traveller, popularly supposed to enjoy his customers' sexual favours. To be 'loose-garbed' (*discinctus*) was thought to indicate a corresponding sexual laxity.

433–6 Again, the request for a loan without intention of repayment recalls the advice given by Dipsas at *Am* 1.8.101–2. The word used here (435) to describe these gold-diggers is *meretricum*, literally ‘prostitutes’; but I suspect that what Ovid has in mind is their mercenary, *quid pro quo* attitude, and that the term is used as a conscious insult rather than as an accurate social description.

437ff. Ovid’s would-be lover is in the business of persuasion: specialized, but amenable to a traditional set of rules formulated by the rhetoricians. As we have already seen (*Am*. 1.15.1–6, with my note p. 288), Ovid’s professed aim is to adapt this talent to erotic and literary ends, while at the same time rejecting those activities—law, soldiering, statesmanship—with which it was more commonly associated. He now, *qua* instructor, outlines the potential of the written word as an initial approach to seduction.

440–44 There is deliberate cynicism in the choice of examples here, well suited to the complaints Ovid makes elsewhere (*Am*. 3.8.1ff.; *AA* 2.272ff., etc.) that gold is now the only potent persuader—a social objection regularly raised by angry conservative poets in antiquity (most notably, Theognis and Pindar). It was not only, or even primarily, Priam’s *entreaties* that overcame Achilles’ refusal to surrender Hector’s body, but the king’s ransom that the old man brought him: Homer *Il*. 24.228–35. Similarly, wrathful gods are more likely, in Ovid’s view, to be appeased by offerings than by prayers—or at least by prayers when suitable offerings accompany them.

451–3 The italicized words are a direct quotation from Virgil (*Aen*. 6.129) and thus provide something rare in Ovid: specific parody. Aeneas has just made his heartfelt appeal to the Sibyl to show him the way to the underworld, where, we remember, a climactic vision of Rome’s future greatness awaits him (6.756–853): cf. my note on *AA* 2.79–82 (p. 366). The way down, the Sibyl replies, is simple, but ‘to retrace your steps, and get out into the upper air once more—this is the task, this the labour’. For Ovid, of course, the task and labour are to get your girl into bed without laying out expensive gifts on her first.

457–8 Acontius, a young man from the island of Ceos (modern Kea), off the Attica coast, saw Cydippe, chaperoned by her nurse, at the annual festival on Delos, and fell in love with her at first sight. He followed the pair to Artemis’ shrine, where he threw in front of the nurse an apple on which he had written the words: ‘I swear by Artemis I will marry Acontius.’ The nurse handed the apple to Cydippe—apples were frequently given as a declaration of love—and the girl, without thinking, read the message inscribed on it: aloud, as was the custom in antiquity. Though she threw the apple away, she still

felt herself bound by this unintentional oath. Three times her father tried to marry her off to some other suitor: on each occasion Cydippe contracted a mysterious (and presumably psychosomatic) illness. Prior to their fourth attempt, the family consulted the Delphic Oracle, all became clear, and Cydippe duly married Acontius (a cynic might be forgiven for deducing that she in fact had wanted him from the start).

459–86 Once again Ovid attacks official values, by changing the motive for acquiring the technique of eloquence from success in court or forum to success in bed. His opening words are a mockery of old-fashioned rhetoric and virtue; they also recall Virgil's advice to farmers (*Georg.* 2.35–6) to learn the arts of *culms*, a term that echoes ambiguously in this context. 'Young men of Rome' (*Romana iuventus*) was a favourite phrase of Ennius, and the 'noble arts' associated with the orator and advocate sound a trifle hollow when exercised, not on senator or judge, but against the defences of a girl.

From line 469 onwards another didactic precept, similarly adduced from the agricultural world, is introduced: patience. With patience, horses and oxen are broken for domestic use. Ploughing wears down the coulter, water dissolves stone. Persistence is all.

487–504 With a decidedly awkward break in the flow of his argument, Ovid now turns to advice on how to approach one's mistress in public. That it is a mistress he is describing seems clear from the use of the term *domina* in lines 488 and 504. Yet most of the advice, apart from the cryptic exchanges he envisages by the lady's litter (487–90), seems designed to achieve a pick-up (491–6) or attract attention (497–504). The kind of behaviour he advocates in colonnade and theatre (cf. 67ff.) is meaningless if directed towards a prize already won, and I suspect that here (as often) his weakness for the associative erotic cliché has led him to compose a thematically loose sequence.

For the theatre (497–504) as an ideal setting for pick-ups and feminine exhibitionism see 89–92 above, with my note p. 341. If the use of eyebrows and sign-language was no more subtle than that in fashion at dinner-parties (*Am.* 1.4.15ff. and my note p. 272), a Roman auditorium must have offered a fascinating spectacle during the intermission. While it is true that the mime, with its eternally cuckolded husbands, must have encouraged an atmosphere conducive to adultery, Ovid's advice here could not, by any stretch of the imagination, be thought sophisticated. The heavily significant behaviour he advocates—applauding lovers' roles, sitting on till the girl of your choice leaves, then leaving too, hint, hint—is in line with his earlier prescriptions for action at a dinner-party (*Am.* 1.4) or the races (*Am.* 3.2, cf. 135–64 above), and suggests, to put it mildly, a certain naivety. Ovid's flippant advice to 'waste time at your mistress's whim'

would not have gone down at all well with serious-minded Romans, who structured their day like any American executive.

505–24 This rather unexpected mini-lecture on masculine toiletry and hygiene fits very well into the didactic tradition that Ovid is exploiting. It also sheds some interesting light on the conventional standards of the day, not least as regards the emphasis—essentially Greek-derived—that smart Romans placed on hair-styling. Ovid's general line is one still familiar today, and carefully taken into account by advertisers of, e.g., men's colognes and after-shave lotions: i.e. that while a man should keep himself reasonably clean, well-groomed, free from body-odour and pure of breath, to go much beyond this smacks of effeminacy (505ff., 523–4, and cf. AA 3–433ff.). 'Cybele's votaries' (507) were the eunuch temple-attendants of the great Anatolian mother-goddess, conventionally regarded as homosexual, and thus liable to curl their hair and depilate themselves. Their cult had been introduced into Rome in the late 3rd cent, BC, but clearly still aroused hostile feelings among conservative Romans.

Ovid's general attitude to adult homosexuality is casual, pragmatic and dismissive (AA 2.683–4 with my note, p. 380, cf. *Am.* 1.1.20). This seems odd when we recall his otherwise enlightened and considerate sexual preferences, but is probably attributable to that stereotyped distinction made in antiquity between pederasty of a formalized sort and homosexual relationships among grown men. Exercise taken in the Campus Martius is also described at AA 3.383–6. For the abduction of Ariadne by Theseus see 527ff. below, and my note p. 356; for Phaedra's infatuation with her stepson Hippolytus, my note to *Am.* 2.18.21–6 (p. 308); for Adonis and Aphrodite (Venus), my note to *Am.* 3.9.15–16 (pp. 325–6). Neither Hippolytus nor Adonis—though both outdoor characters—could be said to typify the normal masculine ideal: their use here in such a context is suggestive.

525ff. The rescue of Ariadne from Naxos by Dionysus (Bacchus) was a famous myth that had attracted many writers and painters before Ovid.

Bacchus (Dionysus), like Apollo, was, *inter alia*, a patron of poets, perhaps because of the conventional view—not moribund yet: consider the Dylan Thomas myth—that strong drink and poetic inspiration were indissoluble. Being susceptible to love (525–6) he also favours lovers: the link with what comes before and after may be tenuous, but it is there. What Ovid says here, viewed in non-anthropomorphic terms, is that drink (provided you do not take too much of it) can give you Dutch courage for seducing women. That is the meaning of 231–6 (see my note, pp. 345–6); the same point recurs, in slightly different terms, at 569ff. Wine removes inhibitions, stimulates courage. Wine gives a

shy man the strength to approach and, with luck, carry off, his own dinner-table Ariadne.

558 The more common version of this heavenly translation, in which Dionysus (Bacchus, Liber) merely set Ariadne's crown, and not the lady herself, in the heavens, can be found told by Ovid at *Met.* 8.178ff. The 'Cretan Crown' is what we know today as the Aurora Borealis.

565ff. Once again we find—with significant didactic variations—the restatement of a theme which Ovid had used in the *Amores* as background to some personal experience: see above, lines 229–52, and my note, pp. 345–6. That dinner-parties and banquets did offer real opportunities, and correspondingly real dangers, in the sphere of adulterous seduction is no mere literary fiction; see my note to *Am.* 1.4.53. That Ovid's anxiety about intoxication was due to something more than natural abstemiousness is clear enough (see, e.g., 567–8, 589ff.). There was also the quarrelsomeness associated with such occasions. It would be to any seducer's advantage to keep his head clear and his wits about him in such circumstances. The 'Lord of Darkness and Nocturnal Orgies' (567) is, of course, Dionysus or Bacchus, whose rites (*orgia*) were held at night.

569–78 The devices here recommended all appear in the *Amores*, thus once again offering at least literary confirmation of Ovid's claim (29–30) to be writing from personal experience. Double-talk: 569–70 = *Am.* 2.5.19–20, 3.11.23–4 (cf. *AA* 2.543, 3.514). Writing in wine: 571–2 = *Am.* 1.4.20, 2.5.17–18 (with my note, p. 272). Meaningful glances: 573–4 = *Am.* 1.4.17–19, 2.5.15–16, cf. *Her.* 17.77. Symbolic use of drinking-cup or food: 575–8 = *Am.* 1.4.29–34. On the other hand, the various 'secret' signs listed at *Am.* 1.4.21–8 do not—perhaps understandably—figure in Ovid's didactic presentation.

579–84 The notion of *cultivating* a lady's husband or other official escort, even if (601–2) you curse him under your breath at the same time, is something new on Ovid's part. Previously, perhaps for dramatic purposes, the *vir* has elicited little from him on such occasions but curses: *Am.* 1.4.1–6, 29–30, 33–40. The only 'cultivation' involved on these occasions is the plan to get the man hopelessly drunk (*ibid.* 51–4) so that he passes out. The idea that husbands are more useful to the would-be seducer as friends, and therefore deserve special consideration, may be tactically advantageous, but is not advice that Ovid ever portrays himself as having taken.

585–8 Prior to this quatrain, Ovid has been passing out cheerfully cynical instructions on what tactics best serve the would-be seducer at a dinner-party. After it he resumes in the same vein—brisk, pragmatic,

protreptic. The nearest we come to morality is the vexation of Juno and Pallas (625–6) at being outsmarted by Venus during the Judgement of Paris. Yet the text as it stands requires us to believe that for four lines Ovid solemnly moralizes at his audience about the evils of abusing friendship, and how such conduct leads the collector (*procurator*: it could also mean ‘agent’ or ‘bailiff’) to collect more than his proper charge, i.e. to take over his master’s wife along with his accounts. Such lines are clearly out of place here. Flabby language, inappropriateness of sentiment, and quite striking irrelevance to the matter in hand all stamp these lines as ‘a moralizer’s feebly composed insertion’ (Goold, p. 92).

589–94 The mythological example of the fight between Centaurs (of whom Eurytion, killed during the brawl, was one) and Lapiths is well chosen in this context, since at the wedding of Hippodameia the Centaurs became violent-drunk, and tried to rape the bride.

601 The toast is, of course, ambiguous: while the company may take ‘the man she sleeps with’ to be her ‘present partner’ (*viro*), the proposer—and the girl—will know better.

603–6 Once again Ovid is adapting earlier material to didactic ends. Two passages from the *Amores* describe the end of a party, (i) At 2.5–21ff. Ovid’s rival takes advantage of Ovid’s apparent (but in fact feigned: cf. 597–600, which acquire an ironic flavour in this context) drunkenness to snatch some heavy kisses from his girl, (ii) At 1.4.53ff., a near-parallel situation to that posited here, Ovid proposes to meet his girl in the crowd when the guests are departing, and her husband will, hopefully, be unconscious-drunk under the table. As he well knows, such a set-up has only limited potential. Even a drunk husband comes home eventually, more often than not sooner rather than later, and proceeds to lock his wife away. All the pair can hope for, realistically—like Ovid’s girl and her new lover in (i) above—are a few hurried kisses; or, here, where a pick-up rather than a reunion is assumed, some fast and persuasive talking on the man’s part to lay the foundations for a future affair (607–30).

607–10 What I have translated as ‘clodhopping bashfulness’ (*rustice ... Pudor*) was a favourite target of Ovid’s: for his attitude to *rusticitas* cf. below, 659–72, and AA 3.127–8, with my notes, pp. 359–60 and 385–6.

611–30 The erotic axioms propounded here are familiar and perennial. Flattery will get you anywhere; every woman, whether virtuous or not, not only loves to be flattered, but takes it for granted, whatever her appearance, that she is well worth flattering. Even if you hand out compliments in a mood of cynical indifference, you may well

end up in love anyway.

631–6 The idea that lovers' oaths were not binding had a long history, going back at least to Hesiod, who made the remark apropos Zeus (Jupiter) when the god, having turned Io into a white heifer, denied on oath to Hera (Juno) that he had had intercourse with her. It seems possible that Ovid had this occasion in mind when writing lines

635–6. Line 632, *pollicito testes quoslibet adde deos*, contains a classic sexual double entendre impossible to render adequately in translation. It can mean either 'Call any gods you please to witness your promises', or 'Promise any sexual performance you like, and throw the gods in too'. By no accident, a similar joke turns up, in an identical context, at *Am.* 3.3.19, where the gods whom Ovid's mistress has falsely invoked are described as *sine pondere testes*—'worthless witnesses' or 'half-cock performers': my rendering 'puffball witnesses' at least tries to catch some of the ambiguity.

637–42 This famous passage (with which cf. Plin. *HN* 2.26) has been quoted more often than properly understood. The existence of gods was indeed expedient for Augustus (who doubtless *believed* in them no more than did Ovid) and for his policy of social regeneration. The old religion was an instrument by which the Princeps hoped to achieve order, revive tradition, idealize the past, control the present. Its ritual patterns formed a cohesive agent with which the fragmented society of the Republic might, hopefully, be glued together again. Most important of all, it offered some kind of ultimate moral sanction in an age which singularly lacked such things.

It is from this programme that Ovid, in six packed lines, strips away the highfalutin pretensions of Augustan moral reform to reveal the political realities beneath. Religious utilitarianism was nothing new in Roman thought: it had been prefigured by Varro. But Ovid exposes the rationale behind the system with acid clarity. Gods are politically useful: so let us assume their existence and observe their festivals (637–8). The injunction not to 'embezzle deposits' may sound a little odd to a modern reader; but when no such thing as a bank safety vault existed, valuables or cash were often left in trust with a friend, who was under a religious obligation to return them on demand (cf. *Juv.* 13.15–16).

643–58 The argument proceeds smoothly from premiss to conclusion. (i) the gods, by imperial decree if for no other reason, are to be taken seriously, not least in the matter of keeping one's sworn oath; (ii) however, lovers' oaths are traditionally inoperative; therefore (iii) reserve your lying promises for the girls you aim to seduce. A fourth argument is added by way of rider: Since women themselves are

congenital cheats (cf. *Am.* 3.3, *passim*), they can be deceived with impunity, and, indeed, with a good semblance of moral justification: let perjury earn perjury in return. This proposition Ovid then illustrates, not over aptly, with two popular just-so stories often linked by ancient rhetoricians, the common element being an adviser or inventor hoist with his own petard.

The first theme (647–52) concerns Busiris, a mythical king of Egypt, who at the instigation of a Cypriot seer, Thrasias (or Phrasias) attempted to end a nine-year drought by sacrificing a stranger annually—the first victim being Thrasias himself. Ovid’s second motif (653–4, expanded at *Tr.* 3.11.40ff.) commemorates a 6th cent. BC inventor, one Perillus or Perilaos, who designed a brazen bull in which victims could be roasted, and offered this device to Phalaris, the tyrant of Acragas in Sicily. Phalaris—a historical, and highly unpleasant, character datable to the mid-sixth cent. BC—accepted the gift, but is said to have made Perillus himself the bull’s first victim. The irony of line 655, of course, is that these are the only recorded occasions on which either Busiris or Phalaris displayed any feeling for justice at all. Clearly in all ages the psychological urge to ‘make the punishment fit the crime’ (even when no crime has been committed) far exceeds any concern for historical accuracy.

659–72 Observe the skill with which Ovid moves into his most morally questionable gambit. Tears and kisses, he says, make potent emotional inroads on a girl’s resistance. The atmosphere thus conjured up is one of pleading, of gentle blandishment: such kisses, Ovid remarks parenthetically (667–8), must not be too violent. Yet the key phrase here is ‘she wants to be overcome’ (666), with its echoes of that charming seduction scene in the *Amores* (1.5.15–16). The axiom that a woman never means it when she says no—familiar to all students of rape and its mythology—offers a perfect lead-in to the advocacy of erotic violence that immediately follows (673–704), and automatically justifies it. The man who fails to press home his advantage after stealing kisses can now be described, without embarrassment, as guilty of the worst solecism Ovid knows—*rusticitas*, here translated as ‘gauche-ness’, and broadly identified in the poet’s mind with either a conscience or else provincial naivety (the two being interdependent) as regards illicit love-making (cf. *Am.* 3.4.37–40, 3.10.18; *AA* 2.565–6).

673–704 The proposition that all women either welcome rape or are converted to it by their ravishers—thus justifying the use of violence to break down their resistance (673–4)—is illustrated by two interesting mythical examples. The first, which Ovid mentions only in passing (679–80), is the carrying off of Leucippus’ daughters, Phoebe and

Hilaira, by the Dioscuri (Castor and Polydeuces, or Pollux). The latter had been invited to the girls' double wedding at Messene, being cousins not only of the brides, but also of the brothers they were to marry. Instead, the Dioscuri eloped with Phoebe and Hilaira themselves. This incident was a popular theme in ancient art. So indeed was Ovid's second example, the rape of Deidameia, daughter of Lycomedes, king of Scyros, by the youthful Achilles, when disguised as a girl. When Achilles was nine, Calchas the prophet foretold that Troy could not be taken without him. The boy's mother, Thetis, therefore disguised him as a girl and sent him to Scyros, where he was raised among the maidens of Lycomedes' court. The background (683–8), beginning with the Judgement of Paris (see my note on 247–8, p. 346) and Helen's removal to Troy, assumes familiarity with the myth in the reader.

704–22 Having made his point, Ovid now quickly backs off. The caveman axiom of irresistible (and secretly coveted) violence is replaced by a watered-down, socially more acceptable version of male domination: man leads, woman follows. Despite his claim (above, lines 277–82, with my note, p. 347) that women would in fact make the running did men not order things otherwise, he here suggests—with more than a hint of self-contradiction—that these sexually voracious creatures might nevertheless feel social embarrassment (*pudor*) in the leading role. They are—a favourite leitmotiv—dying to be asked (above, line 666; cf. *Am.* 1.5.15–16, and, equally apposite here, *Am.* 1.8.43–4, where the old bawd suggests that what prevents girls pursuing the matter themselves is not *pudor* but rather *rusticitas*, a revealing change). The clinching argument comes at 713–14: no girl ever seduced Jupiter, *he* always went after *them*—a pleasantly irreverent conceit, especially when we remember the Jupiter: Augustus equation and Augustus' known partiality to young girls.

723–38 With allusions to sailors (723), husbandmen (725) and athletes (727), Ovid recaptures the didactic motif: a weatherbeaten complexion may suit such professions, but the lover—also, for Ovid, a professional—should be pale and wan, a traditional convention. Unfortunately, the poet is so pleased with this stock *topos* that he forgets his own earlier recommendation, i.e. that lovers should acquire a good healthy suntan from outdoor exercise (513). Two mythological instances of pallor in the lover follow: (i) Orion in the woods, lamenting his bride Side, whom Hera sent down to Hades because she rivalled Hera in beauty, and (ii) Daphnis, the Sicilian poet-shepherd, also apparently pining for a Naiad, though her name, and circumstances, remain obscure. Another stock symptom of the lover was thinness (733–6), several times asserted by Ovid to be one of his

own physical characteristics (*Am.* 1.6.3–6, 2.9B.13–14, 2.10.23–4, with my note, p. 298).

739–54 Right and wrong, friendship and honour (*fas, nefas, amicitia, fides*), the core-elements of Roman morality, are here re-defined in simplistic and far from elevated terms, based on the central criterion of not stealing your friend's mistress. For the professional lover this is an understandable moral code. Few, however, if we are to believe Ovid, maintain even these standards. There follows (743–6) a list of mythical relationships marked by honourable restraint. Patroclus presumably refrained from cuckolding Achilles with 'fair-cheeked Diomedes'; their friendship, like that between Theseus and Pirithous, was proverbial. Pirithous did not seduce Phaedra, Theseus' wife; and Pylades, similarly, refrained from making advances to Helen's daughter Hermione, despite her famed beauty, because she was married to his close companion Orestes. The isolation of these shining exceptions vividly illustrates what was regarded as the norm. The last two instances of pure love both involve brother and sister: Apollo and Athena, Castor and Helen. However, at 747–8 Ovid makes it clear that anyone who still believes in such honourable restraint is living in a fantasy world: the argument from impossibility (*adynaton*: cf. lines 271–2 above, with my note, p. 347) is invoked with telling effect.

755–72 At the close of Bk 1 Ovid reverts to a didactic theory he has expressed earlier (see, e.g., lines 360 and 459ff., with my notes, pp. 350 and 354): the comparison of women to fields, crops and harvest. Their cultivation (*cultus*) then becomes the business of the lover in Bk 2, and their own concern in Bk 3. The echoes of Virgil are explicit (757–8 recalls *Georg.* 1.54–6, 2.109–11), and hunting metaphors recur to reinforce the point. Proteus (761–2), the Old Man of the Sea, was a symbol of metamorphosis as early as Homer's day: Ovid *Met.* 8.732ff. The nautical image of the concluding lines (771–2) picks up the reference to Jason's steersman Tiphys in the proem (above, 5–8): Ovid as *praeceptor amoris* is reminding us of the boast with which he embarked on his task.

BOOK 2

1–10 Ovid's actual exclamation (line 1), odd to non-Roman ears, was 'Io Paean': in English 'hurrah' is a tame parallel, but will have to do. 'Paean' was originally a title of Apollo in his function as healer, then a processional chant (often, as here, a victory-song) addressed to the god. It is interesting that Ovid should, after his declaration at AA 1.25, begin AA 2 with an indirect acknowledgement of Apollo's aid. But then, as we have already seen (my note to AA 1.25–30, P. 339) Ovid was perfectly willing to use Apollo as a symbol of inspiration or

godhead when it suited him. Why here? Because his poetic art, as exercised in Bk 1, has demonstrably triumphed. Like all good didactic verse, it has a practical end in view, it is *opus utile*: endorsement by readers provides the best proof of its success. Thus the opening distich operates at two levels: (i) the reader (as Ovid hoped) has applied the precepts and caught his girl (with a repetition of the by now familiar hunting metaphor); and (ii) Ovid himself has attained his own objective, the composition of a successful work of art, which not only eclipses Homer but also beats the old arch-didacticist Hesiod at his own game. For the curious myth of Pelops and Hippodameia (7–8) see my note to *Am.* 3.2.15–16, p. 313.

Just as in AA 1.30, so Ovid here (15) slips across his appeal to Venus more or less out of the corner of his mouth. At the same time the reference to Erato (16) is, from a literary viewpoint, loaded. Erato was the Muse of love-poetry, and thus appropriate enough in this context. Ovid, however, means the reader to recall two other passages, both from well-known epic poems, where Erato was similarly invoked at a critical moment: the *Argonautica* of Apollonius Rhodius (3.1–5), and Virgil's *Aeneid* (7.37–44). Apollonius is introducing the great love-story of Jason and Medea; but the invocation in the *Aeneid* solemnly commemorates Aeneas' landing on the shores of Latium, the onset of great wars and heroic deeds. Once again Ovid is undercutting Augustan propaganda by evoking it in an emphatically non-heroic context: even the 'too-ambitious project' (*magna paro*) of line 17 echoes a similar claim by Virgil (7.45: *maius opus moveo*).

19ff. The device with which Ovid both introduces (19–20) and rounds off (97–8) his lengthy narration of the Daedalus-Icarus myth is, at first sight, both contrived and hyperbolic. He claims that his task, as *praeceptor amoris*, is to clip the wings of a god (for this double sense of Amor cf. AA 1.7)—a control that Minos could not even exercise over mortals. What is the point of this *mythos*?

The basic notions that Ovid may have been trying to get across are: (i) The difficulty of controlling a god (since Minos could not even restrain a man); (ii) *Per contra*, the ability of *ars*, here personified in Daedalus, to master any difficulty *en principe*; and (iii) Bearing in mind how his particular adventure turned out for Icarus, an illustration (*paradeigma*) of the dangers attendant upon *ars* incorrectly applied or wilfully ignored. But it is, surely, the third that most fully explains the *mythos*.

If Ovid, like Daedalus, personifies the true *artifex*, then the wing-clipping, the control of flight at which he aims has as its object not merely Love (*Amor*) *qua* anthropomorphized deity, but also unruly passion as manifested in the unwise student. Icarus, in fact, is the

symbol of the rash, headstrong, uncontrolled lover, an awful example of what may happen when passion throws off the prudent guidance of *ars*, of rational technique. The parental bond linking Daedalus and Icarus is analogous to the teacher-student relationship between Ovid and the young gallant he is addressing: it also recalls Chiron and Achilles in the proem to Bk 1. The moral is simple, almost Horatian: follow reason and avoid extremes; otherwise you are liable to wind up like Icarus.

25–8 Daedalus was an Athenian, of the Erechtheid royal clan, and cousin to Theseus; he also figured as the prototype of the versatile creative artist–architect, sculptor, metalworker, inventor, and much else besides. He is said to have murdered his nephew and pupil Talus by throwing him off the Acropolis out of jealousy at the younger man’s inventive skills; as a result he was tried by the Areopagus, and left Athens as an exile, winding up at Minos’ court in Crete, where his skills found him profitable employment.

45ff. Ovid gives a more detailed description of the way Daedalus created his flying gear at *Met.* 8.189ff.

55–6 The constellations mentioned here are chosen specifically as navigators’ aids: Icarus is *not* to steer by the stars, but simply to follow his father. For ancient legends about the Great Bear (today more commonly known as the Dipper) see my note on *Am.* 3.12.23–40, p. 332. Orion the hunter tried to rape Artemis, who, ever-resourceful, had him bitten to death by a scorpion: both the scorpion and Orion were then turned into constellations. That is why, in the heavens, Orion always flees westward round the sky from Scorpio—a nice just-so story or aetiological myth.

77–8 This vivid detail (expanded at *Met.* 8.217–20) cannot but call to mind Pieter Brueghel’s ‘The Fall of Icarus’, so tellingly interpreted by Auden in his famous anthology poem ‘Musée des Beaux Arts’. It makes us ask ourselves, not only whether Brueghel consciously used Ovid (which he may well have done), but also what may be the relationship between Ovid’s descriptions and various Pompeian wall-paintings depicting the same scene. Did Ovid inspire the paintings? Or are both he and they dependent on a well-known and well-articulated Hellenistic tradition? The second of these possibilities is intrinsically more probable; at least ten Pompeian paintings of the Fall of Icarus survive.

79–98 Ovid’s presentation of Daedalus’ flight-plan, both here and in the *Metamorphoses*, has aroused surprisingly little critical comment. Daedalus has expressed a wish (25–8, cf. *Met.* 8.183–4) at least to lay his weary bones to rest in his native soil, i.e. in Attica (cf. above): very

reasonably, since to be buried—or, worse, *not* buried—in a foreign land was regarded as the worst sort of fate that could befall a man. When Minos proves obdurate, Daedalus fabricates wings for himself and Icarus, and they set off—presumably for Athens, or perhaps, bearing Daedalus’ ancient exile in mind, for some destination on, or just beyond, the frontiers of Attica. Daedalus tells his son not to navigate by the stars (55–8, cf. *Met.* 8.206–8), but simply to follow him. This, arguably, was a mistake.

From Cnossos to Delos (79) their route lay due north: Virgil (*Aen.* 6.16) confirms the direction. This, if not the most direct flight-route to Athens (which would have taken them north-west from Thera, now Santorini, by way of Siphnos, Seriphos, Cythnos and Ceos, the modern Kea), was—so far—a perfectly reasonable way of getting there. It used the major islands (Thera, Naxos, Paros) as landmarks, and from Delos onward could follow the long coastlines of Andros and southern Euboea. But at Delos, against all probability, Ovid makes Daedalus turn, not north-west but due east. This is why, when the pair reached the island of Icaria, Samos lay ahead of them, a little to port, while the islands of Lebynthos, Calymne (now Kalymnos, renowned for its sponge-fishers) and Astypalaea were well away to the south, on their right hand, just as Ovid describes the scene (a traveller on the Olympic Airways Athens-Samos flight gets a perfect bird’s-eye gloss on this passage). Icarus now flew too near the sun, fell in the sea, and was drowned. Hence the name Icaria. Daedalus, nothing daunted, now revised—indeed, reversed—his itinerary, and proceeded to fly due west for something like 500 miles non-stop, finally touching down in Sicily (*Met.* 8.260–61). Ovid describes him at this point as ‘exhausted’: we may well believe it.

Clearly, something is very badly amiss with Ovid’s account—and, *a fortiori*, with the whole popular tradition on which he drew. Why, after reaching Delos, does Daedalus turn east instead of north-west? Further, if his original route to Icaria and the eastern Aegean was planned, and not accidental, what was he meaning to do there in the first place, and why did he change his mind? And why, after the death of Icarus, did he then fly, not to Attica (as might rationally have been expected) but clear out of the Aegean to Sicily (or Campania: Virgil’s account, *Aen.* 6.14–17, has him touch down at Cumae)?

Ovid will have been well aware of the alternative tradition, according to which Daedalus *did* fly to Athens or Attica, just as we might expect. But, we ask at this point, if the flight-plan was logical, and Attica was indeed Daedalus’s destination, how does Icaria come to form so integral an element in the tradition? The key to the whole story, in almost every source, is the eponymous association of Icaria,

or the Icarian Sea (line 96), or both, with the fall of Icarus. Icarus gave Icaria its name. In the face of this consensus we can only conclude that tradition, very early on, settled for the wrong Icaria. Once that assumption is made, the solution to the problem becomes simple and obvious.

There is only one Icaria which offers a serious alternative to the eastern Aegean island of that name: the famous Attic deme of Icaria or Icarion, which belonged to the Aegeid tribe. It lay three or four miles south-west of Marathon and east of the modern village of Ekali, on an elevated plateau between the main massif of Pendéli and the smaller Dionysovouni, within easy reach of Marathon Bay. Its connection with Dionysus reminds us that one of its better-known demesmen was Thespis, the early exponent of Attic tragedy. If Daedalus was making for the Marathon region from Delos, his flight would take him directly over Andros and south Euboea: the latter, as we shall see in a moment, may be significant.

If Icarus, in the original version of the legend, was associated with Icaria in Attica, where did Daedalus himself land? Can we explain or adjust the final stage of his uniformly paradoxical flight-plan? Granted that he may well, in the course of time, have taken himself off to Sicily or Magna Graecia, what was his original immediate destination? The tradition followed by Virgil is helpful here. The old Greek name for Cumae was Cyme; and we know two cities of that name in the Aegean world. One, the most familiar, lay on the coast of the mainland opposite Lesbos: it was from here that Hesiod's father sailed to Boeotia. But the other lay on the Euboean coast, a high citadel looking out towards Scyros, a natural landfall for the aerial traveller, and Daedalus could well have ended his journey there, safe from a renewed charge of blood-guilt, but still close enough to Attica. If one strong tradition made him go to Sicily after Icarus' death, whether by air or sea, it would be only too easy to claim him, as does Virgil, for Cumae—or, indeed, for the Icarian Sea.

Though Ovid does not mention Cumae, his entire sequence dealing with Daedalus could not fail to recall the dramatic opening of Virgil's *Aeneid* Bk 6 (lines 14ff., and in particular 23ff., where the whole myth of Pasiphaë, the Minotaur, the Labyrinth, the ball of twine and the death of Icarus is outlined). Daedalus, Aeneas and Augustus are all symbolically linked by Virgil. The great artificer is 'indeed a mythological prototype of the brilliant Augustus', to whose imperial achievements the latter part of Bk 6 looks forward. Just as Ovid earlier mocked Virgil's pretensions by applying the older poet's phraseology in a frivolous erotic context (see AA 1.453, with my note, p. 353) so here Daedalus as a symbol of creative achievement is

transferred from the Virgilian context of Rome's future greatness to Ovid's equation with the *praeceptor amoris*. This, in effect, Ovid says, was what it all led to, its culminating point—the art of picking up pretty girls in a sophisticated metropolis.

99–106 Ovid's attitude to magic is somewhat ambivalent. As an aphrodisiac it earns his condemnation on two counts: drugs can be dangerous, while spells are ineffectual. In addition to the present passage see lines 415–26, where he sanctions the use of mildly aphrodisiac foods; *RA* 249–90; *MF* 35–42 (a very brisk dismissal); and *Her.* 6.83–94, where he is again discussing Medea. The argument is neat and compelling: a famous sorceress who cannot keep her own lover no more inspires confidence than a bald promoter of hairrestoratives. Elsewhere, particularly in the *Amores*, he shows himself well aware of the links, verbal and affective, e.g. in the double sense of the word *carmen*, 'spell' and 'song' or 'poem', between magic and poetry (cf. *Hor. Sat.* 2.1.82). One poem (*Am.* 1.6, cf. my note, p. 275) is actually built round a magical refrain, the purpose of which is to soften the obdurate heart of the poet's mistress. There is also a hint of sympathetic love-magic at *RA* 719–20. Thus Ovid, we see, only objects to the use of magic in its pharmacopoeic sense (which can be physically harmful), and as vulgar hocuspocus (a corruption of true verbal magic, i.e. the poet's art, as he makes clear at *RA* 251–2).

107–44 Looks fade, but a glib tongue lasts for ever: thus, invest in persuasiveness as an insurance against middleaged physical depreciation. No accident, either, that the example Ovid picks is Ulysses (Odysseus), who to a Roman reader would be primarily associated with smooth trickery and deceit. If we further weigh in the hero's striking ability to charm women—whether goddesses, nymphs, virgins, or indeed his own wife—then his value to Ovid as a symbol of the blarneying lover becomes obvious.

Nireus (109) was the handsomest man at Troy after Achilles: this led later writers to use him as the conventional type-figure of male beauty. Hylas (110), a pretty young boy, accompanied his lover Heracles on the first stage of the voyage of the Argonauts. While drawing water from a spring on the Mysian coast he was stolen away by nymphs who fell in love with his good looks. The passage describing the decay of beauty with age (113–20, cf. *MF* 45–50) is, as we might expect from a sensitive hedonist, both serious and poignant. The episode from the Trojan War which Odysseus is represented as describing here can be found in Bk 10 of the *Iliad*. He and Diomedes made a night-sortie to kill the recently arrived King Rhesus of Thrace and steal his famous white horses. During this expedition they also caught and killed a Trojan spy, Dolon, who (with over-nice

parallelism) was himself hoping to spirit away the horses of Achilles. Note the symbolism of that intrusive wave (139–40): reality will keep breaking in on the teller of tales.

145–76 After eloquence, tolerance. The lover may in fact be a persistent wolf but must on occasion don sheep's clothing to gain his desired end. The tart broadside against marriage as an institution (153–8), with its emphasis on 'law' and 'legal fiat', cannot have much pleased Augustus, so anxious to promote the state of matrimony, so fierce against those who abused it; there may even be a covert allusion here to the *Leges Iuliae* (see *Introd.*, p. 71). And would Livia, who offered her consort a shrine dedicated to Concord (*Ovid Fast.* 6.637–8), have cared for the reference to wrangling wives? The financial side of love-making, too (i6iff.), is never absent from Ovid's mind for long. The pattern is established as early as *Am.* 1.3.7ff.: on the one hand crass rivals whose strength lies in their bank-balance; on the other the poet-narrator who offers genius in lieu of cash (cf. *Am.* 1.8.57ff., 1.10.1 iff., 3.8 *passim*). The autobiographical motif (once again confirming AA 1.29, his claim to teach from experience) is reintroduced at 165–6 with the candid admission, never before made in plain terms, that he 'couldn't afford gifts, so spun words'—a characteristic ambiguity, since the phrase 'spun words' (*verba dabam*) carries in Latin the secondary meaning of 'cheat' or 'deceive'.

Retrospective allusions in Ovid often, as here (169–76), demonstrate an interesting ability on the poet's part to reinterpret, revise or openly manipulate past experience (whether real or fictional). The reader will recall the original version of this hair-pulling episode in *Am.* 1.7 (cf. my introductory note, pp. 275–6), where the girl was terrified, Ovid showed himself abjectly repentant, and the dress-tearing never occurred at all, but was merely an *arrière-pensée*. In the new presentation the girl is a mercenary bitch who knows exactly how to cash in on Ovid's remorse, and the worst that Ovid has to say about himself, by implication, is that such outbursts of emotion come expensive and are fit only for raw adolescents (cf. AA 3.568–71). The *praeceptor amoris* now knows better, and is ready to use his younger self as an object-lesson—though even here he cannot resist a feline cut at imperial policy, in the shape of the boy Gaius' disastrous Parthian expedition (175, cf. AA 1.177ff., and my note on 181ff., p. 344): disastrous, he clearly implies, *because* of Gaius' youth.

177–232 We know (AA 1.755ff) that women's characters vary; but we have come a long way, here, from the tough seducer of Ovid's original programme. Diplomacy and charm imperceptibly merge into stubborn persistence, a gambit we have met before (cf. AA 1.470ff.), but in the lines that follow, this obduracy, *per contra*, melts away and leaves our

gallant doing, again and again, whatever his girl may dictate, however unreasonable. Adoption of all her enthusiasms (199ff., cf. AA 1.503–4, and my note, p. 355) is followed by deliberately losing to her at games; before we know where we are the lover is performing (209ff.) all those menial tasks that were normally a slave's responsibility, but formed the traditional self-imposed burden of the Roman elegiac lover, the so-called 'servitude of love'. How far Ovid in this passage is slyly mocking the absurdities of such a convention can scarcely be determined with any objectivity; but I suspect a certain ironic ambiguity, not least because of the way in which *servitium amoris* is here juxtaposed, somewhat bizarrely, with Ovid's familiar agricultural-didactic motif (e.g. AA 1.43–50, and my note, pp. 339–40). The woman before whom a lover must abase himself is variously described as a stubborn branch (177–9), a newly grafted green bough (647ff.), a fallow (351ff.) or fertile (667–8) or barren (513) field; this vegetable passivity is not entirely offset by allusions to the ferocity or jealousy of a provoked mistress (372ff.), the erotically aggressive urges of the sex in a more primitive society (477ff.).

For the image (184) of the bull and the yoke cf. *Am.* 3.10.13, 3.11.36, and esp. AA 1.19, where it gains added programmatic emphasis as part of the proem. For the story of how Milanion won Atalanta as his bride (18sff.) see my note on *Am.* 3.2.29–30, pp. 313–14. Apparently he had earlier dogged her footsteps, love-smitten, while she was out hunting in the Arcadian hills: Prop. 1.1.9–14 tells a similar story. This devotion had its hazards. On one such trip two centaurs, Rhoecus and Hylaeus, tried to rape Atalanta, and Milanion was either shot or clubbed by Hylaeus while rescuing her

Unfortunately we know little in detail about Greek or Roman board-games: the general sense of these lines (230–8) is clear enough, but the detailed rationale behind them eludes us. Lines 203–4 look as though they describe something akin to draughts or backgammon, perhaps the 'twelve-point game' (*Indus duodecim scriptorum*), while 205–6 would seem to be the standard dice-game (cf. Cic. *De Div.* 1.13). What I have loosely paraphrased as 'halma' was the game known as 'robbery' (*Jatrocinium*) or 'the robbers' game' (*Indus latrunculatorum*).

When Hercules (215–22) had completed his twelve Labours he went off to Oechalia and won an archery contest given to decide who should obtain Eurytus' daughter Iole in marriage. Eurytus, however, refused him as a son-in-law on the grounds that he might once more go mad and kill his children. Subsequently, in somewhat obscure circumstances, Hercules killed Eurytus' son Iphitus, and was afflicted with some kind of disease as a result. To cure himself, the Delphic

Oracle told him, he must serve as a slave for three years, and the sum obtained from his sale must be paid as compensation to the sons of Iphitus. His purchaser was Omphale, queen of Lydia, who according to some accounts made Hercules work as a tirewoman, spinning and weaving. Later, to revenge himself on Eurytus, he captured Oechalia, slew the king, and carried off Iole by force.

233–54 In this passage Ovid, with some ingenuity, manages to draw together three conventional themes: (i) Love as military service, (ii) Love as servitude, and (iii), a corollary of (ii), the lover-shut-out (*exclusus amator*). It might be thought that (i), with its connotations of pursuit and conquest, was incompatible with the other two; but by stressing the hardships of the soldier's lot, Ovid contrives to avoid overt inconsistency. His paradoxical fusion of predatory action and masochistic passivity is, to say the least, psychologically suggestive. There are, of course, obvious parallels between a love-affair and a military campaign, which must have dictated the *topos* to begin with, and Ovid exploits these most fully in *Am.* 1.9 (see my introductory note, p. 279). But the features he stresses, as here (note the bad-weather cross-country lead-in of 231–2) are route-marches, bivouacks and sieges, with their obvious symbolism (cf. my note on *AA* 1.363–4., P. 350. This enables him, in the present passage, to combine the roles of erotic commando, passion's slave and *exclusus amator* in eighteen short lines—a remarkable piece of manipulation. The hardships of a soldier must be accepted with a slave's humility; and the-reference to 'slack troopers' recalls Ovid's definition (-4m. 1.9–41ff.) of lovemaking as a *cure* for sloth or idleness. On Hero and Leander see my note on *Am.* 2.16.31–2, p. 306.

The 'enslaved god' motif was used by Greek writers, the two most popular examples being (i) Heracles-Omphale, already discussed above, and (ii) Apollo-Admetus, briefly alluded to here in lines 241–2, the argument in each case being 'Why should a mere mortal object to suffering what a god was forced to undergo?' When Zeus slew Asclepius with a thunderbolt for raising the dead, Apollo in anger killed the Cyclopes who had forged the bolt. Zeus wanted to hurl Apollo down to Tartarus, but at Leto's intercession he commuted this punishment to a nine-year's thralldom under Admetus, king of Pherae.

254–72 Earlier, at lines 16ff., Ovid showed himself ultra-cautious, not to say parsimonious, in the matter of gift-giving (cf. *AA* 1.413ff., and my note, p. 352). The circumstances, however, are significantly different. There, as in *Am.* 1.10, what Ovid objects to is being dunned for presents by a gold-digger. Here he is rather laying out ground-bait in the hope of future successes. Linking the two attitudes we find conscious echoes of the plausible old bawd in *Am.* 1.8 (cf. my

introductory note, pp. 277–8): see, e.g., the lines describing the slave who asks for presents (265–6 = 89–90), or the notion of buying something in a city shop under false pretences (265–6 = 99–100). Later, we may note that empty-handed Homer (279–80) is the precise analogue of the penniless but blue-blooded suitor (65–6) who gets an equally brisk *congé*—and for the same reason—from the object of his affections. As so often, Ovid shows himself ambivalent in attitude. For the most part he is advocating that hopefully conspiratorial approach to servants portrayed in *Am.* 1.6, 2.2, 2.3 (doorkeeper) or 1.11, 1.12 (maid as go-between). Regarding the seduction of maids, however (see *Am.* 2.7, 2.8, and *AA* 1.351ff., with my note, p. 350) he remains—for reasons based on experience—ultra-cautious.

‘Good Luck Day’ (255–6) was 24 June, the day on which Servius Tullius, one of the early kings of Rome, dedicated a temple outside the city, on the right bank of the Tiber, to Fors Fortuna. Ovid gives a fuller account of Fors Fortuna at *Fast.* 6.773–86. The festival took place at the midsummer solstice, on what is now St John the Baptist’s day. Lines 257ff. allude, obliquely, to the so-called ‘Maids’ Festival’ (*Ancillarum Feriae*) held on 7 July. According to legend, when the Gauls had been driven from Rome by Camillus and the city was still in a weakened state, many of the Latin tribes besieged Rome, and, as the price of peace, demanded that the Romans surrender their wives and daughters. At this, a certain maidservant (Philotis or Tutula, accounts differ) advised sending herself, and other servant-girls, dressed up as freeborn women: during the night they would light a fire-signal from a fig-tree, and the Romans could then kill their enemies while they were asleep. The ruse was successful, and the girls were rewarded. That this myth was aetiological is clear enough. It offered to explain (a) why the festival of 7 July was also called ‘the fig-tree Nones’ (*Nonae Caprotinae*) and (b) why on it slave-girls dressed up as matrons received presents, were feasted in booths made of fig-branches, and took part in mock battles—all of which suggests a primitive fertility ritual akin to that of the Saturnalia.

Ovid’s ambivalent exploitation of pastoral motifs and allusions in lines 261–72 repays careful attention. As against the expensive gifts demanded by an urban lady, he calls for a return to the traditional love-tokens consecrated by bucolic tradition: fruit, apples in particular, fulfilled this function from an early period. The counter-point is driven home by Ovid’s reference to Amaryllis and her chestnuts, a verbal parody of Virgil *Ecl.* 2.52 (from a passage where Corydon, love-struck, is promising the beautiful boy Alexis a regular cornucopia of flowers and fruit). Amaryllis is no country shepherdess these days; she disdains such simple offerings. On the other hand her

citized lover is no more rural than she is: his basket of fruit is bought in the Via Sacra. So much for Augustus' back-to-the-land movement, and the Virgilian poems that promoted it.

273–86 Once again we catch, suitably transmuted, the cynical advice of Dipsas in the *Amores* (1.8.57–66). What is the value, Ovid asks, of a poem? What is the true criterion of desirability? Here the *praeceptor amoris* is forced, regretfully but with pragmatic insight, to agree with the old bawd (and to repeat his own lament from *Am.* 3.8). Cash is the quickest way to any woman's heart. This is the Age of Gold indeed, but not, alas, the ideal Saturnian revival envisaged in Virgil's Fourth Eclogue (esp. lines 4ff.), with its scarcely veiled allusions to Augustus' beneficent New Order. No writer except Plato refers to the Golden Age so often as Ovid—yet he never once (in sharp contrast to his Augustan contemporaries) envisages its possible return. Homer, he claims, the very embodiment of poetic genius, would get nowhere now without wealth (61 = 279–80); as Dipsas saw (65–6), blue blood is equally powerless. Ovid's poetic spells (*carmina*) are, in the last resort, no more effective than the cantrips of a common witch.

287–94 A nice instance of making generosity to inferiors provide a psychological bonus in erotic terms.

295–314 Again Ovid adduces the dubious ploy of indiscriminate compliments (cf. AA 1.303–4, 2.199ff.), but here (309–10) also hints at the allied technique of what we may term cosmetic euphemism, i.e. converting a vice or blemish into its mirror-virtue, a device of long standing and even with some magical or apotropaic overtones—as when Greek sailors hopefully referred to the Black Sea, a notoriously treacherous stretch of water, as the Euxine (i.e. 'kindly to strangers'), or to the Furies as the Eumenides ('Benevolent Ones'). The *topos* in relation to women had a long literary history: see below, lines 641–62, and my note, p. 379. That Medusa (309) should have been chosen as the type of the 'fierce' female lover (Ovid clearly preferred his girls passive) is significant when we recall her chief power—that of petrification. We should perhaps refer this allusion to the situation in *Am.* 3.7, where a girl takes the initiative, briskly, with Ovid, but (as Mistress Quickly said of Falstaff in a different context) 'all was cold as any stone'. See my note, pp. 320–21. The familiar maxim *ars est celare artem* (cf. 313–14) has obvious practical application in Ovid's case, and not only as a precept for the cosmetician (AA 3.151–8). The compliments, it is clear from this whole passage, are insincere, though their recipient must believe them genuine.

315–36 Autumnal fevers (probably increased by the breeding of the anopheles mosquito) were a recurrent plague in Rome, and often referred to by poets. It may be noted that the most common reaction

of an elegiac poet whose *inamorata* fell ill was to offer up prayers for her—at a safe distance. Even Ovid's own poems on Corinna's abortions (*Am.* 2.13, 2.14) could be construed in this light. Thus his present advice, while offered primarily as a device for advancing a lover's chances, does also involve the lover himself in considerable personal risk while (for whatever motive) doing his lady an unsolicited kindness. On the other hand, the familiar agricultural metaphor at line 322 not only relegates her to the status of a cultivable field (cf. *AA* 1.360, 755ff., with my notes, pp. 350 and 361–2; it also reinforces the image by recalling Virgil's description of cattle-diseases that are, likewise, most common in autumn (*Virg. Georg.* 3.44off.),

337–52 The use of metaphors drawn from ships and sailing to describe sexual progress recurs throughout the amatory poems: see, e.g., *Am.* 2.9B.7–8, 3.6 *passim* (esp. 23ff.); *AA* 1.5–8, 771–2 (with my notes, pp. 339 and 362); 2.181–2, 514; 3.99–100, 500, 584; *RA* 447–8, 811–12. The notion of skilled steering, controlling the seas of passion, etc., all emphasize seduction as a skilled art, the woman (whether active or passive) as a natural phenomenon. So, of course, do the agricultural images: in particular, that of the fallow field soaking up rain (351–2) reminds us of Ovid's equation between women and crops. The human psychology of the advice given here (345ff.) may be trite ('absence makes the heart grow fonder') but is, unlike so many of Ovid's *obiter dicta*, at least *prima facie* credible.

353–6 As usual, the aphorism is illustrated by mythical *exempla*. For Demophoôn and Phyllis see *Am.* 2.18.22 and *RA* 591ff., with my notes, pp. 308 and 417–18. Penelope's frustrated desires during Odysseus's long absence are given extra point by the interpretation put on her 'testing' of the wooers at *Am.* 1.8.47–8 (cf. however *Am.* 3.4.23–4). Laodameia's passion for Protesilaus, the first Greek ashore—and the first casualty—at Troy is well-attested (cf. my note on *Am.* 2.18.38, pp. 308–9), especially after his death; but she had been married to him before his departure, and it is nowhere suggested that his presence around the house bored her: to that extent the example is somewhat inappropriate. We may note that though Penelope, like Phyllis, is given her epistle in the *Heroides* (§ 1), Ovid avoids the notion of having Laodameia dispatch hopeful *outré-tombe* messages to Hades.

357–72 After the general proposition, a limiting rider. Absence, yes, but not too long an absence, otherwise the counter-proverb applies: Out of sight, out of mind. Again, this piece of psychological common sense is illustrated from myth: the seduction of Helen by Paris. When Paris came to Sparta Helen had already been married to Menelaus for a decade: her daughter Hermione was nine years old. Menelaus

entertained Paris for just over a week, but then had to leave for Crete to attend the funeral of his maternal grandfather Catreus. Profiting by his absence, Paris made off with Helen. The choice of illustration is interesting, since Ovid does not criticize Helen for adultery, merely blames her husband for not keeping better watch over her (and on the motives for even this concern cf. *Am.* 2.19 *passim*, with my introductory note, p. 309).

373–86 With elegant aplomb Ovid continues to hand out his (perhaps deliberately) trite pieces of proverbial wisdom. Hell, he says in effect, hath no fury like a woman scorned. The examples of Medea and Procne are equally well-worn in such a context. For Medea's murder of her children see my note on *AA* 1.331–40, p. 349, and for Procne, that on *Am.* 2.6.7–10, p. 295.

387–408 However, Ovid continues, still relentlessly plying his readers with the apt aphoristic cliché, what the eye doesn't see, the heart doesn't grieve over (the theme echoes that of *Am.* 3.14: see my introductory note, p. 335). Play the field—but make sure you cover your tracks adequately. For the dangers of ill-erased tablets cf. *Am.* 2.5.5–6, *AA* 3.495. To illustrate his proposition, Ovid manipulates the story of Clytemnestra, Aegisthus and Agamemnon in a most remarkable way. We hear nothing about the sacrifice of Iphigeneia, which in Aeschylus' *Oresteia* provided Clytemnestra with her main motive for revenge. Nor, here, is Aegisthus established in Mycenae as the queen's consort long before Agamemnon's return. Instead, Clytemnestra remains chaste even after hearing rumours of Agamemnon's supposed wartime concubines, Chryseis and Briseis, only committing herself to Aegisthus when Agamemnon actually appears with Cassandra in tow! Surely this cleaned-up version of an all too well-known legend shows Ovid at his most ironical, tongue demurely in cheek?

409–24 The advice to 'deny all' echoes—in a different context—*Am.* 3.14.15ff. That only successful performance in bed can dissipate suspicions of infidelity is strongly suggested by *Am.* 3.7.75ff. Oh the use, and avoidance, of aphrodisiacs, magic or otherwise, see above, 105–6, and my note, pp. 366–7. Pepper and nettleseed were, for obvious reasons, regular ingredients in urticant aphrodisiacs: nettle, indeed, was regarded as a general panacea for anything from nosebleeds and dog-bites to a prolapsed anus. Ovid seems to be alone in attributing aphrodisiac qualities to yellow camomile (pyrethrum), and his advice to eat honey and pine-nuts sounds uncommonly like an ordinary high-calory, energy-producing diet formula. The goddess worshipped on Mt Eryx was Venus: see *Am.* 3.9.4s, and my note, p. 327.

425–34 The sailing and chariot-racing metaphors of the original proem (cf. AA 1.1–40, with my note, p. 339) are deployed at intervals throughout the *An*, as here, to mark the poem's several stages of development, to re-emphasize the need for technical skill and control, and to provide structural links in the overall pattern.

435–54 The use of competitive rivalry, or the threat of it (427–8), to stimulate flagging passion is a constant factor in Ovidian psychology: cf. below, lines 547ff., AA 3.579ff., 675ff., and especially *Am.* 2.5, 2.19 and 3.4 *passim*, with my introductory notes, pp. 309 and 315–16. Ovid admits (AA 3.597–8) that his own desires are only kindled by 'wrongs' (*iniuria*): both in that passage and this (439–40) he uses the tell-tale image of embers to make his point.

455–92 The whole passage describing reconciliation in bed (459–66) is not only brilliant—and psychologically sound—but also, with characteristic mischievousness, contrives at the same time to parody the Virgilian glorification of Roman imperial rule. At 467ff. one wonders, to begin with, why Ovid should suddenly launch into a short account of the creation of the universe (cf. *Met.* 1.5–88 for a more extended version). The answer comes at 477ff. Sex, we learn, was a great civilizing influence on primitive and brutal mankind: even in a more sophisticated age it can (489–92) still heal anger and resentment. As usual with Ovid, there is more in this digression than meets the eye. The passage contains powerful echoes of Lucretius, a poet whom Ovid, as we know (*Am.* 1.15.23, cf. my note on 9–30 p. 288), much admired. The passage of the *De Rerum Natura* most commonly adduced as the inspiration for Ovid's lines is 5.925–1027, Lucretius' description of primitive life on earth, and in particular 1011–18 for the softening effect of sex on wild men of the woods. This is a very curious misapprehension, since what Lucretius actually portrays here as an instrument of civilization is *the institution of marriage*, or at least of monogamous cohabitation. If Ovid means the reader to recall this passage, he surely has his tongue, as so often, in his cheek, since what *he* is describing (489–92) is sex as a device to soften up your mistress when she suspects you of infidelity.

Machaon, son of Asclepius, with his brother Podalirius, was surgeon to the Greeks at Troy.

493–508 The epiphany of Apollo to poets is a literary device with a long ancestry. Though Ovid is quite capable of inconsistency in his attitude to the god (see AA 1.25–30, and my note, p. 339), here, clearly, as at *RA* 75–8, he introduces Apollo both as the god of healing—thus providing a link with the previous section through his reference to Apollo's nephew Machaon—and as the patron of poets. The god endorses his *praeceptor amoris* by repeating two pieces of

advice that Ovid had already himself handed out in Bk 1 (2.505–6 = 1.595–6; 2.507–8 = 1.463–8); but he also reminds Ovid, *qua* poet, that a high-flown digression such as 467–92 is not appropriate to the matter in hand, that he should stick to his erotic last. It is not only the lover (cf. AA 1.463ff.) who must remember to suit style to audience. While Bk 1 is mostly concerned with overcoming external obstacles, Bk 2 has as its central aim self-knowledge, self-control, and humility. Hence a third reason for introducing Apollo at this point: the application of the Delphic precept (500). Yet even here, as the sequence makes plain, ‘Know yourself is only prescribed in the adoption of favourable, self-flattering positions. Cf. AA 3.771, where the same principle is recommended to women.

509–38 Though Ovid allows the god to terminate his digression and put him back on track, Apollo gets no more of the credit for the poem’s actual content than he did at AA 1.25; it is ‘my techniques’ (512) that will bring a lover success. The guarantee is accompanied by a familiar warning. Seduction is not a matter of unbroken successes: the setbacks outnumber the triumphs, a suitor must work by trial and error. As the metaphor of the furrow (513) reinforces Ovid’s concept of woman as a field ripe for ploughing, so both it and the sailing image that follows (cf. above) emphasize the virtues of intelligent control. This control in turn involves hardship: our old friend *servitium amoris* (see my introductory note to *Am.* 1.6, p. 274), the notion of ‘passion’s slave’ (515ff.). The cluster of allusive comparisons (517–20) at once recalls a similar passage in Bk 1 (57–60)—except that there it is the number of girls in Rome that Ovid is touting, whereas what he emphasizes here are the troubles a lover will perforce go through in getting them. The contrast is significant: cf. also AA 3.149–52.

539–600 With a portentous mock-epic build-up Ovid announces his key precept, to be regarded with the respect normally accorded an oracle (541–2): a lover should tolerate, and where possible ignore, any rivals. This is ‘hard and exacting’ (538, cf. *RA* 768), as Ovid is well aware: at 547ff. he admits his own imperfections in this respect, with a plain reference to the incident described in *Am.* 2.5.13ff. (cf. my introductory note, pp. 293–4). At the same time both the advice itself and the myth employed to illustrate it (561–92) are presented in highly ambiguous terms. Ovid is addressing a hypothetical lover (contrasted, at 597–8, with a legitimate husband), and in his ‘autobiographical’ confession (547ff.) himself assumes the lover’s role. A lover, he says, must wink at his mistress’s infidelities, just as (545–6) a husband (*maritus*) will allow such latitude to his lawful wife (*uxor*)—a situation with which we are familiar from *Am.* 2.19. Why? Because detection simply encourages flagrant and persistent adultery

(559–60): the guilty parties have nothing further to lose, and might as well get their money's-worth of fun. This thesis Ovid then illustrates by retelling the story of Hephaestus (Vulcan), Ares (Mars) and Aphrodite (Venus). In conclusion, and apparently with a straight face, Ovid asserts (599–600) that he is not discussing, or addressing, respectable married ladies.

What are we to make of this contradictory hodge-podge? If Ovid is concerned solely with lovers (the only way in which he could justify his final disclaimer), why does he (a) emphasize, in unequivocal language, 'the complaisance of *husbands*, and (b) tell, at great length, a myth in which the husband is the spoilsport, and adultery gets no criticism at all—indeed, even Homer's statement that Ares had to pay a fine for his sexual poaching is suppressed (cf. 357–72, 399–408, with my notes, pp. 374–5)? If, on the other hand, he is concerned with both husbands and lovers, what is the point of the disclaimer? Is his paradoxical conclusion—that the revelation of adultery encourages its continued enjoyment—one that bears much, if any, resemblance to observable facts? To take only the most notorious instance, still a fresh scandal when the *Ars* was published, would the elder Julia, Augustus' daughter, and her five known lovers (there were others) have been inclined to endorse Ovid's theory? Iullus Antonius was executed, and the rest, including Julia herself, banished (Syme (1), p. 426, with *reff.*). Even granted that adultery in the ancient world did thrive on exposure, like a cultured broth, can the myth of Ares and Aphrodite in fact be employed to support such a notion? Certainly not in Homer's version (*Od.* 8.266–366), on which Ovid has mainly drawn: Ares retreats to Thrace, Aphrodite to Paphos, and there is no hint of a reunion.

The truth of the matter surely is that Ovid's disclaimer here, like that at AA 1.31–4, was tacked on, with careless indifference, to a text which belied it throughout. The advice is ostensibly for lovers alone, but applies *a fortiori* to Roman husbands, whose wives—whatever Ovid may say for the record—clearly played the adultery game with expertise and enthusiasm. Yet if Ovid is merely trying to warn off any marital busybody who might try to spoil the fun (and that would seem, on the face of it, the obvious explanation), he has chosen a singularly inept way of doing so. The *cause célèbre* of Julia's exposure was so fresh when Bk 2 of the *Ars* appeared that it is hard not to suspect Ovid of alluding to it; but Julia on her island was in no position to carry on with anyone, let alone with her previous lovers. If the advice is ironic, the irony can only be described as heavy-handed. Perhaps Ovid's implication is that while Augustus' harsh measures might work in special cases, such as that of Julia, to apply them

generally would—like modern laws on drugs and homosexuality—create a gross public nuisance without being in the slightest degree effective. Hence, arguably, the advice (555–6) to know nothing, leave guilty secrets hidden and force no confessions from the lady. There is extra piquancy in the fact that Augustus prided himself on his own descent from Venus.

601–40 The train of thought here is intriguing. Religious mysteries should not be divulged: sex is one such mystery, under the auspices of Venus. The act, like those parts of the body associated with it, should be kept hidden. Even primitive man observed this kind of privacy, in contrast to animals, that copulate without shame or concealment. But today, though men may not actually perform *coram publico*, they nevertheless boast of their conquests indiscriminately, naming names. Worse, they claim, falsely, to have seduced girls whom they never in fact touched, so that ‘though the flesh escape defilement, reputes is tarnished’ (634–5). About his own affairs Ovid maintains—or so he says—a discreet reticence: just how should we relate this assertion to the *Amores*? And after getting used to a poet who continually exploits religion in terms of sex, how seriously are we to take him when he announces sex as a species of religion? Since he totally ignores its procreative aspects (except as an unwanted calamity in *Am.* 2.13 and 2.14, with the rider that indiscriminate abortion might have deprived Rome of its most famous leaders) he cannot share Lucretius’ celebration of Venus as *élan vital*. I suspect that what his advice boils down to, stripped of its fine verbiage, is simply ‘Be discreet—and don’t ruin reputations by loose talk, especially if the scandal happens not to be true.’

The rites of Ceres (Demeter), being associated with the Eleusinian Mysteries, were proverbially secret, and restricted to initiates. The island of Samothrace in the northern Aegean was the cult-centre of mysterious chthonian deities known as the Cabiri (Kabeiroi), probably Phrygian in origin. For Tantalus (605) see my note to *Am.* 2.2.44–6, p. 292.

641–62 Besides repeating clichés to emphasize their triteness, Ovid will sometimes take a well-worn commonplace and give it a completely new twist for his own purposes. Here he borrows two such rhetorical-psychological propositions, and combines them: (i) that a lover is, in his blindness, attracted by the actual faults of the person he worships, and (ii) that by giving a fault a euphemistic label it can be turned into a virtue.

What is original about Ovid’s treatment is this: he assumes, not that the lover is infatuated by the defects in his beloved—far from it. Rather he finds them repulsive, while at the same time being smart enough,

in his own interests (642), to conceal his disgust, and to produce a commendatory euphemism for the feature that turns him off. Ovid, with some psychological shrewdness, notes that patience and tolerance of this sort will, after a while, acclimatize their practitioner to the fault they accommodate, so that he barely notices it. Once again *ars*, conscious technique, has triumphed over irrational impulse; once again the sillier manifestations of passion are demurely mocked. For Andromeda see my notes on *Am.* 3.3.17–18, p. 315, and *AA* 1.53, p. 340. Ovid again refers to Hector's wife Andromache as a tall woman at *AA* 3.777 (cf. *Am.* 2.4.33).

663–702 Ovid's sexual preferences are clear: he favours mutual passion and preferably simultaneous orgasms (cf. 725–9, and *Am.* 1.10.36–7). This does not necessarily indicate altruistic consideration on his part: it is what he needs to give *him* pleasure, and possibly to arouse his own desires. Conversely, he dislikes, and presumably is sexually put off by, the mercenary element in prostitution (or gold-digging, its amateur analogue), which he equates with *absence of desire* (*Am.* 1.10 *passim*, esp. 21–4). The somewhat cryptic remark about homosexuality (684) is presumably to be explained by an assumption on Ovid's part that boys submitted to sodomization, or indeed any sexual approaches, not out of desire, but for profit. Ovid seems to have held—as indeed did Aristophanes, Horace, Catullus and Juvenal: the assumption was widespread and perennial—that while paederasty in the strict sense, i.e. love of adolescent boys, was permissible, if not over-rewarding, effeminacy in adult men could not be socially condoned (cf. *AA* 1.523–4).

All this helps to explain the present passage, a lively recommendation of older women as lovers: not for Ovid the pursuit of bashful virgins. Not only are such women uninhibited, not only have they reached their full sexual potential, but—best of all—they are expert as well as experienced (675ff.). Thus Ovid can, somewhat unexpectedly, introduce yet another argument in favour of *ars*, rational technique, this time from the women's viewpoint—even while still describing her, in sexual terms, as 'a field worth sowing' (668, cf. 697–8).

703–32, 669–74 It is a paradoxical commonplace that, in a poem entitled the *Art of Love*, Ovid should spend so little time—especially considering his preoccupation with technique—on the actual business of love-making. His Muse is formally bidden (704) to remain outside the bedroom door: ostensibly as a token of civilized modesty (cf. 615–24), but in fact, one suspects, in accordance with the popular belief that people have always known by instinct (*Am.* 1.5.25) just what to do when they find themselves in bed and in love.

The imagery, as one might expect at this point, picks up, in a final recapitulation, several of Ovid's most dominant motifs: the control of boat (725, 732) or horse (732)—cf. 425–34, with my note, p. 375— and in particular the association of love and warfare (709–16). Most interesting of all are the mythological illustrations. Both Andromache and Briseis, by no accident, are portrayed as women who enjoy the advances of a military lover hot from the battlefield. The original purpose of these two—*exempla* emerges far more clearly at *Am.* 1.9.33–40 (cf. my note, p. 280): Achilles and Hector were no less fierce in battle *after they had made love* to Briseis or Andromache. Surely the reader would be expected to remember that fact here? In addition to his other encouragement, the *praeceptor amoris*, despite the fact that he presents seduction (673–4) as an act virtually calling for Churchillian 'blood, toil, tears and sweat', is nevertheless reassuring each hopeful gallant that a fine performance in bed will not unfit him for those other occupations—sailing, farming, fighting—which Roman society accepted and valued.

733–46 My task is ended, Ovid says (733), and indeed his closing lines (all save the final couplet, which looks very much like a later addition) do read very much as though they were planned to form a coda for the whole poem. There are confirmatory hints of this original two-book *An* in the body of the text; and the coda itself, with its extravagant boasts of prowess—setting Ovid in the company of various great mythical masters, repeating the comparison with Automedon, the pointed references to Achilles—forms a neat and satisfactory counterpart to the original proem of Bk 1. We have to imagine a two-book poem which later acquired Bk 3 and the *Cures* more or less piecemeal. For myrtle as sacred to Venus see *Am.* 1.1.29–30, 1.2.23, with my notes, p. 269. For Machaon's brother Podalirius cf. my note on 467–92, *ad fin.*, p. 376, and for Nestor, that on *Am.* 3.7.41–2, p. 321. Calchas, the chief Greek soothsayer during the Trojan War, was also responsible for Iphigeneia's sacrifice at Aulis. The mention of Automedon the charioteer links this passage structurally with AA 1.5–8, an extension of that compositional pattern we have already noted in Bk I (cf. pp. 77–8). Ovid as Chiron the teacher (AA 1.11–18) has been replaced by Ovid as Vulcan the armourer (741–2): precepts are now weapons, to be used in the chase, the war-game, of seduction. The cycle is complete.

BOOK 3

1–40 Bk 3 opens with that familiar rhetorical device, the *captatio benevolentiae*, or bid for sympathy. There is a subtle piece of parodic self-flattery in the opening couplet. As so often, Ovid is expressing his

theme in mock-epic terms, this time with a broad allusion to Homer's *Iliad*. The events immediately following the end of the *Iliad* were described by Arctinus of Miletus in his lost *Aethiopis*, and some texts actually alter the closing line of Bk 24 to provide a smooth transition: 'Such was the funeral for Hector: then came the Amazon, daughter of great-hearted Ares, the man-slayer.' The Amazon was Penthesilea, whom Achilles slew in battle; he is said to have fallen in love with her as he transfixed her (one for the Freudians), or with her corpse, and to have killed Thersites for jeering at his grief. Ovid is thus playfully comparing himself, not only to Calchas, Nestor, Ajax and Automedon (2.737–40), but also to Homer *qua* poet (cf. line 415). After the picture of women he painted in Bks 1 and 2, the objections he foresees to his volte-face (7–8) are understandable, and not really settled by his barrage of mythological examples. Helen and Clytemnestra (11–12) were both daughters of Tyndareus—just as their respective husbands, Menelaus and Agamemnon, were Atreus' sons. For Eriphyle and Amphiarus see my note to *Am.* 1.10.51–2, p. 282, and for Protesilaus and Laodameia those to *Am.* 2.18.38, pp. 308–9, and *AA* 2.353–6, PP. 373–4.

Admetus, king of Pherae in Thessaly, who was once served by no less a herdsman than Apollo (see *AA* 2.239, and my note, p. 370), married Alcestis, daughter of Pelias. Apollo, in gratitude for Admetus' kindly treatment, persuaded the Fates to agree that, when the king was due to die, his life would be spared if he could find a substitute. Neither of Admetus' parents would die for him; finally his own wife, Alcestis, volunteered to do so. She was afterwards restored to him from Hades, either by the generosity of Persephone or through Heracles' wrestling her away from Death. During the battle between Argives and Cadmeans for Thebes, Capaneus, one of the Seven Champions, was blasted by Zeus with a thunderbolt while scaling the walls on a ladder. His wife Evadne committed suttee by immolating herself on his pyre. Not only were these mythical heroines noble and virtuous, Ovid triumphantly concludes; Virtue (23) is traditionally *personified* as a woman. The mention of Virtue in this context betrays Ovid's mischievous sense of irony—though he at once concedes that his own role as instructor calls for less exalted principles.

There is, as usual, a reason for this careful coyness. The examples Ovid has been giving are all drawn from what we might call the mythological *grand monde*: no pert little freedwomen here, not even elegant courtesans, but famous wives and even more famous adulteresses. Later (57–8) we get a belated reminder of just who is entitled to benefit from Ovid's instruction; here, however, we may reflect that his 'little craft', one way and another, is sailing very close

to the wind. (The sailing image as a metaphor for the creative process is used more often in Bk 3 than that of the chariot: cf. 99–100, 499–500, 747–8.) Perhaps through embarrassment, perhaps once more with mischievous intent, Ovid's arguments here are something less than logical. The claim that women seldom deceive will deceive no one, least of all a reader of the *Amores*; and men are no more likely to shoot flaming arrows (metaphorical or actual) at women than women are at men. The only archer given to this sport, impartially, is Cupid. Further, most people, if asked what Phyllis, Dido, Ariadne and Medea had in common—apart from all figuring in the *Heroides*—would probably agree that their relationships with men were something less than successful. But Ovid's corollary—that in each case this could be blamed on lack of feminine finesse—takes us straight into the world of *The Ladies' Home Journal*, where all marriages can be saved by a few elementary seductive gambits on the woman's part. Once again, it would seem, Ovid's tongue is firmly in his cheek; also, the suspicion arises that, whatever he may say to the contrary, he still, *au fond*, is aiming at a masculine readership.

For Medea and Jason see my note to AA 1.331–40, p. 349; for Ariadne and Theseus, *ibid.*, 525–64, p. 355. Demophoon was Theseus' son: desertion seems to have run in the family. For his abandonment of Phyllis see my notes on *Am.* 2.18.21–6, p. 308, and the fuller version at *RA* 591–608, pp. 417–18. Nine Ways (Ennea Hodoi) was near Eion, on the river Strymon, and the site of the Athenian colony of Amphipolis. Phyllis, a Bisaltian Thracian, accompanied Demophoon as far as Nine Ways when he sailed away to Cyprus. The true origin of the place-name was clearly as a road-junction, but Ovid (*RA* 601–2) attributes it to Phyllis pacing a certain lane to the sea nine times before committing suicide. His final instance is Virgil's 'pious Aeneas', whose departure from Carthage for Italy drove the deserted Dido to kill herself: in this context Aeneas is scarcely presented as a sympathetic, let alone a patriotic figure.

41–56 While ironically advancing his own claims, at an epic level, Ovid also loses no opportunity to deflate the epic world itself. First, he presents a group of renowned mythical heroines as mere cases of erotic disappointment. Now he compounds the insult by suggesting (41ff.) that all they lacked was feminine sophistication—which he, of course, as *praeceptor amoris*, can readily supply. Later (517–24) he goes on to assert, in much the same vein, that many of the famous women of antiquity—a Tecmessa, an Andromache—were dreary bores. It is worth noting the number of times he reverts, in this context, to the Trojan War: and sure enough, after a while, he announces proudly (*RA* 65–6) that if only *he* had been there, with sound professional

advice, the war—along with various other tragedies—could have been avoided altogether.

The epiphany of Apollo in Bk 2 (493ff., cf. my note, p. 376) is matched here by the appearance of Venus, urging equal treatment for women, and reinforcing her demands with a thinly veiled threat. The Greek poet Stesichorus (?630–?555 Be), who wrote a work entitled *Helen*, telling the usual version of that heroine's story, was traditionally supposed to have been struck blind for his presumption: he then wrote a palinode or recantation, containing the lines: 'This legend is not true; / you never went in the benched ships, / you never came to Troy's citadel'—and at once miraculously regained his sight.

57–100 This passage urging women to take lovers wittily parodies the rhetorical exercise known as the *suasoria*, or formal persuasive address. At the same time it contrives, with its reflections on the transience of human beauty, to be unexpectedly moving. The *carpe diem* motif was, of course, a commonplace in Roman literature, perhaps best known from Horace. Its corollary is the brutally realistic picture of feminine old age (lines 69ff.), which, again, forms a favourite theme in Hellenistic and Roman poetry. The cruel mockery of perished loveliness, in an era with a brief and hazardous life-expectation, could not but render the enskyment of youth even more intense and poignant. To an extent that we today can only imagine, every moment—this is also strikingly true of the Elizabethan period—must indeed be enjoyed to the full, since the pleasures it brought were so fleeting. The ominous word 'tomorrow' (*cras*) recurs again and again in this context; the horrific proximity of decay and death was a fact that each individual had to live with from childhood.

Note (57–581) Ovid's formal claim, once again (cf. AA 1.31—4 and 2.599–600), *not* to be offering his erotic instruction to respectable Roman ladies, but solely to the *demi-mondaine*. The ability of the snake (77–8) to shed its skin—and with it, as some thought, its age—made a great impression on Greek and Roman poets. One argument in favour of seduction—that women should not drift into physical degeneration through lack of use—Ovid repeats from the *Amores* (2.3.14). The fact that a plucked flower withers faster than an unplucked one is perhaps unfortunate for his image and argument. Lines 80–81 contain one of his very few allusions to childbirth (cf. below, 785, and *Am.* 2.13, 2.14, *passim*). In the two poems about Corinna's abortion he argues *in favour* of large families, for all the world as though he were a PR man for Augustus; here, however, he puts forward what must have been the standard view among his upper-class clientele, that child-bearing ruined the figure, produced unsightly striations and led to premature ageing. For Endymion and the Moon (83) see my note to *Am.* 1.13.44,

P. 285. This poem was certainly in Ovid's mind, since his second example here—that of Cephalus and Aurora, the Dawn (84)—also figures in the earlier work (see my note, p. 284), and is obliquely alluded to later in two full-scale versions of the death of Procris (AA 3.685–746, with my note, pp. 399–401; cf. *Met.* 7.701ff.). Venus' passion for Adonis is discussed in my note to *Am.* 3.9.15–16, pp. 325–6. To answer Ovid's question (86), Harmonia was the daughter of Aphrodite (Venus) by Ares, presumably conceived during their notorious (and ultimately much-publicized) adultery: cf. AA 2.561ff., with my note, p. 377. Anchises' affair with Aphrodite is mentioned by both Homer and Hesiod. The child of their union was Aeneas.

At line 87 we learn the reason for these *exempla*: mere mortal women should not blush to follow the lead of a goddess. There follows what must surely rank as Ovid's most *outré* argument: a reassurance that the human vagina, unlike stone and metal, is infinitely elastic and does not wear out as a result of heavy use! Not encouraging promiscuous conduct (97)? Surely this line carries a stage-wink for male readers? And when he gaily asks (89) 'Why worry?' he, like jesting Pilate, does not wait for the answers, some of which (unwanted pregnancies being the most obvious) he was well aware of himself. At moments such as this the eristic dexterity cannot mask a fundamental hollowness of purpose. For the use of douche-water cf. *Am.* 3.7.84. The nautical image (99–100) acts as a marker to indicate the end of the proem or introduction, a clearly defined stage in the creative pattern. These two lines also identify the first half of this book as elementary instruction, in contrast to the more advanced advice given later (see 499ff., with my note, p. 395).

101–32 As Hesiod (*Theog.* 1) began with the Muses, or Aratus (*Phaen.* 1) with Zeus, so Ovid here sets up as his own prime divinity *cultus*, cultivation or culture, equally applicable to girls, agriculture and urban life. At one stroke the gods, the didactic genre, and the female sex are all put firmly in their place. Though Bk 3 is dedicated to women, they are still being compared to grapes or wheat; whereas the men are urged to develop their *ingenium*, their natural skills (AA 2.112), women should look to their *cultus*, their physical appearance. We have switched from the intellectual to the cosmetic. A similar prescription opens the fragment *On Facial Treatment For Ladies (MF)*: see lines 1–7 and my note, p. 403. From the advocacy of *culms* for women—'care of the person' would be a fair equivalent—Ovid's train of thought moves, by easy degrees, to another aspect of *cultus*, the sophisticated refinement achieved by contemporary society. This he much prefers to the crude artlessness it supplanted: indeed, lines 121–8 form a kind of personal credo. Once again we see Ovid actively

rejecting, in his own terms, the whole Augustan programme of religious, moral and agricultural reform. Perhaps 'rejecting' is too strong a word when Ovid clearly regards this official line as something both vulgar and risible. The deflation of imperial pseudo-primitivism is done with conviction as well as irony. It recurs elsewhere (e.g. *Fast.* 2.133ff., *AA* 2.268ff.), and always with the same edge of amused contempt. Ovid had no more time than did Gibbon for the triumph of barbarism and religion; the homespun rural virtues of Augustus' ideal godfearing farmer he can scarcely mention without a sneer (cf. *AA* 1.241ff., 607ff., 672). The contrast with a passage such as *Virg. Georg.* 2.458–532, that memorable encomium of country life, is both striking and pointed. At the same time Ovid is careful to emphasize that what he enjoys is not so much luxury as good taste; we are reminded that *cultus* could be used in a pejorative sense, and that Horace anticipated Ovid's distaste for extravagant building schemes. The picture of excessive and tasteless luxury in house-construction leads neatly into an analogous (129–32) warning against personal ostentation (hung ear-bobs, heavy gold brocade).

The far from complimentary allusions (109–12) to Hector's wife Andromache, and Ajax with his vast shield, bring the archaic world of the Trojan War into sharp juxtaposition with Ovid's own society. The Capitol here designates not the whole hill but, specifically, the temple of Jupiter, first built by the Etruscan rulers Tarquinius Priscus and Tarquinius Superbus (6th cent. BC), burnt to the ground in July 83, and rebuilt fourteen years later. It was this second, more ornate temple (Platner-Ashby, pp. 299–300) that Ovid knew. The Palatine (Mons Palatinus) was the centremost of Rome's seven hills, and traditionally the earliest to be occupied by a settlement: archaeology tends to confirm this belief. The reference to 'Apollo and our princes' glances not only at the great temple of Apollo dedicated by Augustus in 28 BC, and the Emperor's own private residence, but also at the fact that various other distinguished persons (including Livia and Tiberius) built their homes on the Palatine.

133–68 Ovid, as we have had leisure to observe in these poems, was fascinated by women's hair—and not merely because careful hairdressing, in Hellenistic style, was a popular Augustan affectation. The 'fallen city' (155) was Oechalia: for Heracles and Iole see my note on *AA* 2.215–22, pp. 269–70. The rescue of Ariadne by Bacchus is described at length in Bk 1 (lines 525–64). The boutiques (167–8) were located in the Porticus Philippi, an arcade built round the temple of Hercules and the Muses, close to the south-west side of the Circus Flaminius. Here there stood a statue of Hercules playing the lyre and representations of the Nine Muses. Close by was that popular site for

assignments, the Portico of Octavia: the boutiques were thus assured of customers.

169–92 The materials for clothing and cosmetics can be subsumed to Ovid's overall schema of *ars* and *cultus*, since they come from nature 'as raw material and must, like their users, be refined. The primary emphasis on colour is significant. Sculptural tradition would suggest a remarkable absence of change in women's fashions at Rome over three centuries; but if the *cut and shape* of the robe (*stola*) remained standard, its *texture or colour* both reveal immense variety. Purple, a dye obtained from the murex shellfish, was the most expensive (line 170); because of this, and its exclusive associations with high rank, it always found a ready clientele.

It is interesting to note that the caution against luxurious clothes and ostentatious jewellery (cf. lines 129–133) does not apply in *MF* (cf. below, lines 205–8). In that fragment (17–26) both are taken for granted. Ovid is simply acknowledging the situation as it already existed in his day: advice does not come into the matter.

The rescuer of King Athamas' children Phrixus and Helle was their mother Nephele in her function as dark rain-cloud. Nephele was Athamas' first wife: he subsequently married Ino, who—in typical wicked stepmother fashion—both brought about an artificial crop-failure, and suborned Athamas' messengers to Delphi to claim that an oracle had foretold relief from dearth if Phrixus was sacrificed to Zeus. Nephele, hearing of this, gave them a ram with a golden fleece on which to make their escape.

193–208 This passage should be compared with AA 1.505–24, where similar hints on elementary hygiene are given to the men (cf. my note, p. 355). However, while both sexes are advised to wash, clean their teeth and avoid unpleasant armpit odour, the girls (194, 199ff.) receive directives on depilation and make-up, activities which the men, *per contra*, are warned to avoid (505–12) as effeminate affectation. Mysia, a province in north-west Asia Minor, and the Caucasus are taken as symbolic of areas to which culture has never penetrated. For the surviving fragments of Ovid's short didactic poem *On Facial Treatment for Ladies* (*Medicamina Faciei Femineae: MF*), referred to here at lines 205–8, see pp. 264ff., and my notes ad loc. (below, pp. 426ff.). The reference provides a *terminus ante quern* for the composition of this little *jeu d'esprit* at least prior to AA 3.

209–35 *Ars est*—in every sense—*celare artem*. The process of making up one's face is compared (219–24) to the sculptor's, goldsmith's or couturier's creative skills, and thus, at one level, equated with both the poet's and the lover's *ars*; but this implied compliment is savagely

undercut by the almost Swiftian repulsion with which the details of the dressing-table are described. The passage thus has a double significance. Art, Ovid says, of whatever sort, is artifice, a process not only of refinement but also of illusion, where nothing prior to the end-product should be revealed, lest the *trompe-l'œil* effect be lost (cf. the wooden statues covered with gold foil, lines 231ff.). But in the case of a woman producing her public image, this artistic process, if observed, gives away rather more than the details of a *grande illusion*. It betrays the fact—something Ovid, at least, regards as axiomatic (cf. RA 341–56)—that women in their natural, unmasked state are, fundamentally, not just uncivilized but actively disgusting (cf. in particular lines 229–30).

The Greek sculptor Myron of Eleutherae was an earlier contemporary of Pheidias (mid-fifth cent. BC). The representation of Venus here described is the famous Aphrodite Anadyomene by Apelles: see my note on Am. 1.14.33–4 (p. 286).

235–50 It is characteristic of Ovid (see above) that the one boudoir activity he is prepared to let girls carry out while their lovers watch is combing and dressing their hair. Even so, savagery and ugliness lurk in the background: the moral is that it takes more than cosmetics to create an acceptable façade. *Private* unpleasantness Ovid takes as axiomatic: his first hypothetical example is a filthy-tempered virago (cf. also lines 369–76, 499–504), his second a bald prima donna: lines 250ff. merely confirm the general picture. The ‘ladies-only temple’ was that of the so-called ‘Good Goddess’ (*Bona Dea*), worshipped exclusively by women: it stood at the north-east end of the Aventine, and was restored by Augustus’ wife Livia. The reference to ‘Parthian girls’ (248) is apropos the Parthian archer’s habit of turning backwards in the saddle to shoot at a pursuing foe: the girl who did this with her wig reversed would then have it facing the right way.

251–80 Ovid’s female readers, he assumes, are for the most part not only personally unpleasant, but also physically ill-favoured. Just as his advice for men (AA 2.160–68) was not planned to suit a wealthy clientele, so here he is not catering for great or legendary beauties: beauty and wealth (255–8) are their own most persuasive arguments. Good wine needs no bush: what use would Helen or Semele have for a *praeceptor amatoris*? There is a certain psychological acuity about these claims insofar as they can be related to their author’s ostensible function *qua* instructor: the clientele of a marriage bureau or lonelyhearts column is not drawn, by and large, from the well-heeled, the well-favoured or the well-adjusted. At the same time Ovid clearly used this as an excuse to exercise a carefully controlled vein of genial contempt for the whole female sex. The short, pallid, scrawny, flat-

chedsted composite figure, with buck teeth and bad breath, that emerges from these lines is both plausible and drawn with a kind of lingering and venomous passion. A concentration on such physical defects is later recommended to the lover (RA 417) as an effective antaphrodisiac, just as he is also told to make a girl with bad teeth laugh (279–80; RA 339).

280–310 Ovid is here making two separate but related points concerning conscious technical skills as they apply to women. First, they are needed in every sphere of activity, however improbable: laughing or crying, walking and talking. The key phrase here is at line 291: ‘Where does art not enter?’ At the same time Ovid sees that too zealous a pursuit of anti-rustic urban smartness can very soon degenerate into the worst sort of modish affectation: here lines 305–7 apply, with their counsel to avoid both extremes. The examples are chosen to illustrate pitfalls at either end of the scale: don’t walk or laugh like a peasant (another calculated jab at the simple rustic virtues promoted by Augustan policy), but, equally, don’t mince along like a city *cocotte*. Moderation in all things. The example of conscious mispronunciation (293ff.) is a nice borderline case, where a very thin line, clearly, divides charm from mere tiresomeness. The moral, though not overstressed, is unmistakable.

311–28 We now embark on a series of pointers to socially advantageous accomplishments: each requires skill, most (but not all: cf. 353ff.) have some artistic content. They form an instructive analogue to the parallel advice (AA 2.121–44) bestowed upon men, where the prime emphasis is placed upon cultivation of the intellect. From each according to her ability, to each according to her needs. First, then, music: a girl must be able to sing and to play some stringed instrument. However, as the mythical *exempla* chosen make all too clear, the object is not art for art’s sake. Like the geisha, Ovid’s girls must learn what will attract, and hold, a male audience. They will perform the latest, most exotic hits (no suggestion, note, that they should acquire, much less observe, any standards of musical appreciation); and the men, like Cerberus, like Arion’s dolphin, like Odysseus’ crew or the very stones of Troy, will be held spellbound. By the Augustan period singing and dancing, once thought an improper activity for respectable persons of either sex, had become socially acceptable if performed privately and with decent restraint.

Alexandria on the Nile was a great centre of musical activity. Alexandrian melodies, and the *virtuosi* who performed them, were much sought after. The Phoenician instrument mentioned here (327–8) was the *nablium*, or *nablus*, a large upright instrument with 10–12 strings, somewhat resembling a Welsh harp, and played two-handed,

in the same manner.

For Cerberus, Amphion, and Odysseus' encounter with the Sirens, see my note on *Am.* 3.12.23–40, p. 332. Orpheus' descent to Hades and bewitchment of Cerberus: my note to *Am.* 3.9.21–24, p. 326. The famous story of Arion—who on his way back to Periander's court at Corinth (? c. 680 BC), after a successful concert tour in Magna Graecia, was robbed and thrown overboard by the ship's crew but rescued by dolphins entranced with his musical talent—is told at length by Herodotus (1.24) and Plutarch (*Moral.* 161B–162B).

329–48 The reading-list given here serves a less exalted purpose than the roll-call of classics that Ovid reels off at *Am.* 1.15.9–30 (cf. my note, p. 288). He is no longer predicting literary immortality—except, hopefully and characteristically, for his own works; he is enumerating a smart girl's minimal social accomplishments. If she is to catch, and hold, an intelligent (*AA* 2.121–44) man's attention, she must not only sing, dance and play table-games without losing her temper; she should be familiar with the poetry—in particular the love-poetry—now fashionable, and have the ability to recite it (with or without musical accompaniment) on demand. Six of the names recommended—Callimachus, Menander, Tibullus, Gallus, Varro of Atax, and Virgil—are repeated from the earlier catalogue. Homer, Hesiod, Sophocles, Aratus, Ennius—but see 409–10—and Accius are dropped (presumably as 'heavies' lacking in romantic appeal) and replaced by Philetas, Anacreon, Sappho and Propertius, all of whose works displayed a strong personal and erotic content. For similar reasons there is no tragedy here (not even Ovid's own *Medea*), and no prose.

It is characteristic of Ovid that he should devote as much space (339–48) to the promotional puffing of his own works as he does to those of all other poets combined. He elsewhere prophesies, in general terms, immortality for his creative *œuvre*: *Am.* 1.15.7ff., esp. 41–2; 3.15–7ff., *Met.* 15.871ff. Here he goes further, and identifies individual poems: the *Art of Love* (341–2), the *Amores* (343–4) and the *Heroides*, or *Letters of Legendary Women* (345–6).

349–52 Ovid's susceptibility to singing and dancing girls has already been made clear: see *Am.* 2.4.25–30. While the reference to public performers (351–2, the ballerinas of the *pantomimus*: cf. *RA* 753ff., with my note, pp. 422–4) might at first sight suggest that he is here addressing only freedwomen or *meretrices*, the passage, if carefully scrutinized, makes it clear that in fact the ballerinas are merely brought in as models for enthusiastic amateurs to imitate.

353–68 With two omissions, the list of board games given here by Ovid (353–66) is repeated later in the *Poems of Lamentation (Tristia)*:

see 2.473–82 and cf. above, AA 2.203–8, with my note, p. 369. Of the various games described, ‘rolling the bones’, a simple dice-game, is the least controversial. These knucklebones, or dice made to resemble

knucklebones (~~ἀστράγαλος~~, *talus*) were marked only on their four long sides, unlike the six-sided dice (~~κύβος~~, *tessera*) used for board-games, and with which we are still familiar today. Lines 355–6 do not refer to a specific game or situation, but form ‘a prefatory couplet describing the application of dice to board-games in general’ (Austin, p. 33 n.1). However, since the game I have loosely equated with *halma*, the *ludus latrunculorum*, 357–60, was played without dice, Ovid may here be alluding to backgammon (*xii scripta*, 363ff., now known in the Near East as *tavli* or *tric-trac*), or to some other game resembling draughts. The *ludus latrunculorum* itself was a ‘soldier-game’ or ‘war-game’. It should not, however, be equated—as is still too often the case—with chess. The twelve-point game was an ancestor of backgammon, played with six-sided dice and thirty pieces (fifteen a side) on a board consisting of three rows of twelve ‘points’, or spaces, each row being divided into two groups of six, separated by a wheel, circle or other symbol.

Another comparatively simple game was that alluded to in lines 365–6, for which no Roman name survives. In essence it resembled that generic group of games including Gobang, Fox and Geese, Merels (from the French *marelle*), and, most familiar to us, Noughts and Crosses. It was played on an eight-line board: the object of the game was to get three pieces in a row, diagonally.

This leaves the game mentioned at 361–2, which is so out of place in this sequence of dice-and-board games that one suspects textual transposition or interpolation. What it describes—something nowhere else referred to in ancient literature—is a number of ‘smooth balls’ being emptied into a net, the object being to move one without disturbing the rest. How this was done is not at all clear. It suggests that popular, and far more comprehensible, children’s game known as spillikins.

It is no accident (cf. my note on 235–50, p. 388) that Ovid’s chief concern with a woman games-player (369–80) is to prevent her losing her temper and revealing her *true nature*. Art (see 209–34) must mask both itself and nature: nature, insofar as the female sex is concerned, gives good grounds for such concealment, being savage, violent, aggressive and uncivilized.

381–96 Ovid’s implicit distinction between masculine and feminine talents, in both scope and opportunity, is here confirmed by social observation. Rome offered a whole range of public activities to men

from which women were traditionally debarred. While men take public exercise (cf. AA 1.513), women should make the rounds of the various sites where (as the poet has already told his masculine readers, especially in Bk 1, lines 67–262) they can be most conveniently approached: the colonnades and porticoes, the theatres, the temple of Isis, the Circus and the racecourse. Nowhere is the double sexual standard more explicitly stated.

Lines 387–92 are more openly derisive of Augustan pretensions than most allusions of this sort in the AA. Pompey's colonnade had been restored by the Princeps, at great expense, in 32 BC. The Palatine temple of Apollo was Augustus' most magnificent building: cf. *Am.* 2.2.3–4 and my note, p. 291. He dedicated it in 28 BC as a thank-offering for his victory at Actium three years earlier, over Antony and Cleopatra. Thus Ovid mockingly ascribes that victory (390) to Apollo's direct intervention. The Princeps' wife and sister (391) were, respectively, Livia and Octavia. His son-in-law (392) was M. Vipsanius Agrippa, who (at a somewhat advanced age) married Julia and was honoured with two successive consulships (28 and 27 BC). Agrippa had played a crucial part in the victories at Actium (31 BC) and over Sextus Pompeius off Sicily (36 BC), on which occasion he won the 'naval crown' (*corona navalis*) for valour. In thanksgiving for his victories Agrippa, too, dedicated a colonnade. The 'Memphian cow' is a derisive periphrasis for Isis: see my note on AA 1.77–8, p. 341.

397–432 Ovid here interweaves two of his favourite themes. First and foremost, there is the poet's overriding concern, his pursuit of fame (403ff.). We have already examined his views on this at length (my introductory note to *Am.* 1. 15, pp. 277–8). As a bait to the girls he is pursuing, he frequently emphasizes the fame *they* will acquire from being written about by him, but this always remains a secondary consideration: *his* immortality will, as it were, rub off on *them*. Good examples of this phenomenon occur at *Am.* 1.3.19–26, 1.10.61–2 and 2.17.27–30. In the present passage (413–16) the stitches, amusingly, show: this may even have been a deliberate effect. Without the *Iliad*, Ovid asks, who would have heard of—well, of whom? Andromache? Helen? Even Achilles? No, of *Homer*, what really lies close to his heart is the *poet's* reputation, not that of his subject. But then he remembers, or affects to remember, that what he originally set out to discuss in this section, before getting sidetracked by his favourite obsession, was essential publicity *for women*. He therefore hastily follows this (strictly speaking, irrelevant) example with that of Danaë, rescued from eternal obscurity in her tower by timely poetical PR work. There follows the admonition that girls (417ff.) should seek maximum exposure on the party circuit.

The pursuit of immortality, however, also leads Ovid into another favourite obsession: what he regards as a contemporary decline in the poet's public status (cf. *Am.* 3.8, *passim*, 3.9.17–18, *AA* 2.273ff., with my note, p. 372). The Roman example he chooses, interestingly enough, is (409–10) Q. Ennius (239–169 BC), the Romanized Calabrian who was patronized by Scipio Nasica, Scipio Africanus, and M. and Q. Fulvius Nobilior. It is ironic that his belief that Ennius was buried in the Scipionic family vault is almost certainly false; even the tradition of the poet's statue having been set up there is suspect.

His argument, in fact, is totally specious. His frequently reiterated assertion that the elegist's art demands respect as hard work, and is not in any sense an idler's soft option, was not calculated to make any impression at all (except as a smart but suspect paradox) on Roman upper-class society at large—and that would have been even more true, *a fortiori*, of the crusty Republican society in which Ennius was privileged to move. There is, furthermore, a good deal which might lead us to suppose that Augustus' patronage of Horace and Virgil—poets whom Ovid, again and again, mocks for their patriotic attitudinizing—was considerably more flexible and enlightened than anything we know of the Scipionic Circle. Yet Ovid carefully avoids mentioning Horace and Virgil in this context, though they would have served his argument very well: his anti-Augustanism was too deeply engrained to allow any hint that the status of poets had been actually enhanced by the new regime. Better a dishonest argument from the Republic than any furtive trucking with Maecenism.

Line 398 offers yet another neat—and unmistakable—instance of sexual double entendre (cf. *AA* 1.409–12, 631–6, with my notes, pp. 352 and 358). The Latin (*fructus abest, fades cum bona teste caret*) can mean either (i) 'A pretty face, unseen, gets no results', or (ii) 'A pretty girl, if never balled, won't get pregnant'. The pun on *testis* ('witness' or 'testicle') is repeated elsewhere (e.g. *Am.* 3.3.19, *AA* 1.632). I have tried to bring out at least a hint of this double meaning in my translation.

'Music unheard gives little joy' (399–400) was a proverbial phrase. On Danaë see my note (pp. 309–10) to *Am.* 2.19.27–28, and on Andromeda those to *Am.* 3.3.17–18, p. 315, and *AA* 1.53–4, P. 340: cf. *Apollod.* 2.4.3–5.

433–66 Ovid is warning the girls what kind of man they should avoid: the over-elegant exquisite, the compulsive rake, the habitual oath-breaker. From a pragmatic feminine viewpoint—and Ovid's view of human relationships is nothing if not pragmatic, cf. lines 461–6—these offer what can only be termed high-risk investments. In literary terms there is ironic satisfaction to be got from watching the *praeceptor*

amoris adapt his plays to a new audience with such bland eristic dexterity. The mythical reference-points gain piquancy from familiarity. Both Theseus' desertion of Ariadne, and his son Demophoön's abandonment of Phyllis, are favourite Ovidian themes: see, e.g., AA 1.525–64, *Am.* 2.18.21–6, AA 2.353ff., *RA* 591–608, *Her.* 2 and 10, *passim*.

Lines 461–6 reveal—against much of his protestations elsewhere—Ovid's highly Roman, and legalistic, sense of the fundamentals governing human relationships: *amicitia*—our word 'friendship' does less than justice to this elusive concept—with its carefully graded mutual benefits, is here envisaged as operating also in the sexual sphere: cf. my *Essays in Antiquity* (London, 1960) pp. 143–5, and further literature there cited.

What is the point of lines 439–40? In the context it is clear enough. Ovid wants an *exemplum* to prove the danger of having anything to do with a dandified lover; and Paris is the epitome of the sexually irresistible, subtly effeminate charmer. When Paris sailed for Sparta, Cassandra prophesied the disaster his venture would bring upon Troy. The couplet 441–2 contains a characteristic sexual pun on the word *pudenda*, which I have attempted to convey in my translation (cf. notes on 397–432, p. 394, and 768, p. 401); there is a similar innuendo in the 'door' of 456.

467–8 For Ovid's practice, in this poem, of using imagery drawn from chariot-driving or sailing to indicate functional and thematic divisions, see above, my note on AA 2.425–34, p. 375: there, as here, the apostrophe is introduced to terminate a digression.

469–98 Ovid's advocacy of the written approach is by now familiar to us: familiar enough for the reader to appreciate his present variations on the basic theme. We have seen it demonstrated in the *Amores* (1.11 and 1.12, *passim*, cf. 2.2.5–6, 2.19.41), and recommended to ambitious gallants in Bk 1 of the AA (lines 437–86, cf. 2.395ff.). In all these cases the lady's-maid (470) formed the crucial go-between (cf. also *Am.* 1.11, 1.12; AA 1.351ff., with my note, p. 350, 2.251ff.). The present passage is clearly meant to be read with AA 1.437ff. in mind.

499–524 At this point Ovid marks a formal break between elementary and advanced instruction (cf. lines 99–100, with my note, p. 385; and for the image, my note on 467–8, above), although the theme on which he now embarks—control of one's temper—has already been touched on in connection with games-playing (above, lines 369–80, with my note, pp. 391–2). There, as here, the natural savagery of women is emphasized (see also lines 235–50, and my note, p. 388), which makes the need for controlling artifice all the more essential: a

woman's public image, whether achieved by cosmetics or psychological discipline, masks something both unpleasant and feral. At the same time, he is fair enough to acknowledge that men, too, are well advised to keep a tight rein on their temper: the present passage forms a diptych with AA 2.145–76, which conveys a very similar message.

For the Gorgon Medusa (504) as a symbol of petrifying female anger or contempt cf. AA 2.700; a nice modern parallel is supplied by Tennyson's famous phrase from 'Maud', 'Gorgonized me from head to foot with a stony British stare'. When Athena (505–6) was playing the flute (or pan-pipes), and saw her puffed and swollen cheeks reflected in the river, she flung the instrument away in disgust (it was later retrieved by Marsyas).

Why are Tecmessa and Andromache type-cast by Ovid as symbols of dreary and anti-sexual depression? Why are they mentioned together, not only here, but at lines 109–12? Surely because both were classic instances of sexual war-victims. Andromache—the epitome of the faithful and loving wife—was, after Hector's death, taken prisoner and allotted as booty to Neoptolemus, the son of her husband's killer; while Tecmessa, the daughter of a Phrygian chieftain, was captured during a Greek raid, and made the slave-wife of Ajax (who had killed her father). Ovid's rejection of both Andromache and Tecmessa as desirable mistresses (519–20) is based, in part at least, on covert compassion; Tecmessa may, as he says, have been a 'dreary woman' (523), but she had every good reason to refuse Ajax a lover's endearments, and the same is true *a fortiori* of Andromache.

525–52 Ovid here returns to one of his pet obsessions, the justification of the poet's life, art, and *mores*, in particular as these affect the women with whom he has to do. He begins with a bold, not to say an impudent comparison: girls should dispose of their admirers in the same spirit as Augustus makes his military appointments (525–30)—a logical extension of the lover-as-soldier motif (cf. *Am.* 1.9, AA 2.233ff., with my notes, pp. 279 and 370). At the same time he is careful to stress, as so often, that poets (i) lack wealth, so cannot be looked to for expensive presents (cf. my notes on AA 2.161ff., p. 368, and 2.273–86, p. 372, with further reff.); (ii) are not 'professional men' as Rome normally understood that term (cf. *Am.* 1.9.41–2, with my note, p. 280); but (iii) should be cultivated in their own right, since they can bestow fame on those whom they celebrate (e.g. *Am.* 1.3.19ff., 1.10.59ff., cf. my note on lines 397–432 above, PP. 393–4); and (iv) are expert in matters of love (AA 1.1ff., and *passim*). For Nemesis, the mistress of Tibullus, see *Am.* 3.9.31–2, and my note, p. 326. Cynthia fulfilled a similar role for Propertius: see In *trod.*, pp. 32–3. For Gallus

and Lycoris see my note to *Am.* 3.9.61–4, p. 327. This identity of Corinna is discussed in my Introduction (pp. 22ff.) and frequently referred to.

Lines 539ff. work further variations on this basic theme. Ovid reiterates his belief that poets are not suited to the occupations of businessman, politician (541), orator (542) or—metaphorical erotic conceits notwithstanding—soldier (539, with a backward glance at 525ff.). We remember, not for the first time, that Augustus had offered Ovid and his brother the chance to enter on a career of public service, which Ovid had tried but, after a short time, firmly and finally rejected (see *Introd.*, pp. 28–30).

553–76 Just as a man is advised, on occasion, to find his way into a woman's bed by an initial display of (non-sexual) friendship (*AA* 1.719–22), so a woman, too, must avoid appearing too openly rapacious, lest she scare off her potential quarry (553f.): we remember, here, Ovid's remarks concerning the supposed violence of female lust (*AA* 1.269–350)—and his recommendation to men to press on with a seduction regardless (*ibid.*, 667ff.). Once again the double standard applies. The same techniques are not appropriate for dealing with callow youths and mature men (555ff.): as a long-term proposition the older lover, male as well as female, has many advantages. It is not often that Ovid so clearly stresses his own age; but in this passage the contrast between the young, inexperienced lover of the *Amores* and the wordly-wise teacher of the *Ars* is pointed up with great care.

577–610 Since I have betrayed the male citadel, Ovid argues, I might as well go on and complete the job. We expect novel revelations. But though the idea of betrayal, in a military context, is new to elegy, what follows is all too familiar: the much-touted proposition that deprivation and competition stimulate jaded appetites. The shut-out lover or *exclusus amator* (581–2, 587–8), Ovid's best-known image of erotic deprivation, recurs throughout his work, and is a standard property of love-elegy.

Ovid, then, has simply rehashed old material in a new context: there is not even a change of emphasis. What we detect here is the axe-grinding of an obsessional *idée fixe*. Psychologically, as we have had ample occasion to note, this love-poet thrives on frustration, and the conventions of elegy provide him with ample scope in this area. What more natural (and more egotistical) advice could he give women than to do everything that would most effectively pander to his own mildly masochistic instincts? This also, of course, gives him the opportunity to recapitulate, briefly and *da capo*, a number of dominant literary motifs from his earlier work: the technique is

deliberately evocative, hauntingly effective.

Line 578 is interesting as the source of a much-quoted (and even more exuberantly oxymoronic) couplet in Tennyson's *Idylls of the King*, where the poet observes, apropos Lancelot's passion for Guinevere, 'His honour rooted in dishonour stood, I And faith unfaithful kept him falsely true' ('Lancelot and Elaine', 871–2).

611–66 It is a curious fact (and one, so far as I know, not remarked on by commentators) that, for all his ambivalent preoccupation with the social frustrations attendant upon a would-be seducer, Ovid nowhere in the first two books of the *AA* offers men any formal guidance on how to circumvent such permanent obstacles as husband, lover or guardian. Certainly there exists no sequence comparable to the present list of smart dodges designed for the ladies. This striking omission, when juxtaposed with Ovid's obvious masochistic pleasure in love's servitude, confirms one's suspicion that—whatever we may feel about his professed Don Juanism—in some ways he very much expected his women to make the running.

The disclaimer of 611–16 is, of course, pure eyewash (cf. *AA* 1.25–30). Ovid may once more pretend, as a safeguard, that his instructions are not designed for respectable married ladies; the context, as always, suggests otherwise. The presence of that intrusive husband-rival recalls the swinging upper-class love-affairs of the late Republic, so accurately reflected in the poems of Catullus, and still all-too-prevalent thirty or forty years later. Nor, of course, would Ovid's warning discourage a lady reader bent on adultery: quite the reverse. On top of that, how safe was it, in fact, at the time of writing, to suggest that freedwomen (615) were fair game? Augustus had, as part of his moral legislation, sanctioned marriage with freedwomen for all Roman citizens except senators. He clearly did not stipulate that such wives would 'be at liberty to deceive their husbands and would be exempt from the penalties of adultery' (Rudd, p. 6). In other words, while making his perfunctory genuflection to the official line on adultery, Ovid cannot resist negating the gesture by the derisive irony of its context.

For Argus the many-eyed herdsman cf. my notes on *Am.* 3.4.19–20, p. 316, and 2.2.44–6, p. 292. The matter of writing letters has already been discussed from both the man's and the woman's viewpoint: see *AA* 1.437ff. with my note, p. 353, and above, lines 469ff., with my note, p. 395. Now Ovid lists all the tricks that can be employed by the go-between—generally the lady's personal maid (*Am.* 1.11.3–4, Tib. 2.6.45–6)—to keep such illicit correspondence moving without detection.

Ovid sees Danaë (631) as a mythical symbol for the locked-up girl reached—and indeed impregnated—against all predictable odds: see, e.g., *Am.* 2.19.27–8, with my note, pp. 309–10. Her father was Acrisius, King of Argos. In lines 633ff. we have a list, again, of the best places of assignation in Rome: theatres, race-track, and certain temples (cf. *AA* 1.73–162), especially those of Isis (635, cf. *Am.* 2.13–7ff.) and the Good Goddess (*Bona Dea*: 637, cf. above, line 244, with my note, p. 388), to which males, including over-sedulous guardians, were forbidden access.

667–86 It goes without saying that Ovid's claim to be crazy or out of control in the exposition of his subject-matter should not be taken seriously. However, just as the *praeceptor amoris* must demonstrate mastery of his subject, so the poet, to show himself truly inspired, must on occasion be carried away—this being the conventional guarantee, in antiquity, of bardic status. The poet may be inspired, but Love's old soldier and shikaree has things well under control. In fact, while apparently showing the girls, with caustic concision, how to manipulate male stupidity and male egotism, Ovid is also quietly setting them up to do just what will suit men best. 'Lemnian swords' (672) were proverbial. The women of Lemnos, in mythical times, did not worship Aphrodite. The goddess, in pique, afflicted them all with such disgusting body-odour or halitosis that their husbands refused to sleep with them any longer, but took Thracian concubines instead. Thus dishonoured, the Lemnian wives murdered not only their husbands, but also their fathers—an intriguing detail that should appeal to Freudians. Hypsipyle alone saved her father; she afterwards became queen. For the sequel to this myth, involving the Argonauts, see my note on *Am.* 2.18.33, P. 308.

687–746 We cannot complain that Ovid does not warn us what he is about when introducing the myth of Cephalus and Procris at this juncture. It is to be a cautionary tale designed to discourage over-suspicious girls; and the clear implication of all that has gone before is that the girls have, indeed, something to be suspicious about. We would therefore expect Ovid to choose an *exemplum* in which the mythical lover had been—and was *traditionally known to have been*—guilty of infidelity, but to manipulate it in such a way that he should, on this occasion, appear convincingly innocent—at least to Ovid's hypothetical girl-students, if not to those more cynical and sophisticated male readers who were well up in the by-ways of mythology, and knew by heart (like Tiberius' professors) just what songs the Sirens sang. When we scrutinize the myth in its totality—as handled by Ovid himself, among other writers—it becomes only too clear that this is precisely what he has done, with subtle skill and the

most calculated allusiveness.

Cephalus has been twice mentioned already in the amatory poems (*Am.* 1.13.39–40, *AA* 3.84, with my notes, pp. 285 and 385), on each occasion as the lover of Aurora, the Dawn. The verbal similarity *Aura-Aurora* will at once strike the reader, all the more so since Ovid went for it deliberately: in the Greek version of the myth the breeze is not in question at all. What Cephalus there addresses is *nephéle*, ‘cloud’. The innocence and pathos at once become a little suspect; and by the time we have reminded ourselves of the myth as a whole, they evaporate altogether.*

Procris was the daughter of Erechtheus, king of Athens. Her sister was Oreithyia, who acquired notoriety after getting herself raped by Boreas: winds with sexual characteristics seem endemic to this story. She married Cephalus, son of Oeion or Deioneus, who as a husband behaved a little oddly, even by mythical criteria. He left his bride shortly after their marriage, and went abroad for eight years. He then returned, in disguise, determined to test his wife’s fidelity. Both the disguise and the idea of the test had been put into his head by Aurora, the Dawn. Why was this? Because, it transpires, the reason for his disappearance was that Aurora—a notorious man-eater—had met him on Hymettus, only a month or so after his wedding, and seduced him, subsequently bearing him a son, Phaethon. Aurora gave him a magically swift hound, and a spear that never missed its mark (this was the spear with which Cephalus afterwards killed his wife). In the *Metamorphoses* it is Procris who, after her reconciliation with Cephalus (7.750ff.) demurely presents both gifts to him—leaving the acute reader to recall how she had acquired them in the first place.

At all events, when Cephalus returned home from this adventure to his putatively faithful wife, he decided to test her fidelity by attempting her seduction in disguise. Cephalus revealed his identity *post coitum*, upbraided his wife severely, and from then on—having thus got himself a splendid psychological advantage—spent most of his time out hunting. Procris, not surprisingly when we recall her spouse’s earlier activities on Hymettus, suspected him in turn of having a mistress.

A Roman audience, certainly the well-read audience at which Ovid directed his work, would not, in any case, forget that in the early Greek tradition not only did Procris *accompany* Cephalus, as a fellow-hunter, on the expedition during which she met her death—note Ovid’s emphasis on her partiality for *solitary* hunting—but Cephalus actually saw her *before* he threw his spear, and ran her through, not by accident, but in a fit of sudden anger, an act for which he was afterwards condemned to exile by the Areopagus. No changeable

breezes there. Their mutual adulteries were equally well known. Ovid, in fact, would have been hard put to it to find a more squalid myth in the corpus when going in search of innocence and pathos; it is reasonable to assume that he knew what he was doing.

Silly girls were expected to take their cue from this silly Procris and to swallow Cephalus' *ad hoc* excuses; Ovid's literate male audience would know better. Educated men would read the whole episode with sharply malicious literary pleasure, and their faith in double standards considerably enhanced. When we reflect on the prominent position this narrative *mythos* occupies, it surely tells us a great deal about the underlying temper and tone of the AA as a whole. Ovid in his own way adored women; but no one who so consistently likened them to crops, cows and other such farmyard phenomena really, in his heart of hearts, believed in the equality of the sexes. Women, like a well-run estate, required *cultus*; but *ars*—and possibly *ingenium* too—was, in the last resort, a male prerogative.

The spring on Hymettus forms the source of the Ilissos, famous from Plato's description (*Phaedr.* 229A–230C). Today its outflow gushes from a marble ram's head on the monastery wall at Kaisariani; before the building of the Marathon Dam it supplied Athens with drinking water. As Ovid will have been well aware, its waters were supposed to cure sterility, and a shrine of Aphrodite stood nearby. Though Hymettus as a whole has suffered severe deforestation, Kaisariani itself is still thickly overgrown with pine, cypress, plane and (a tree Ovid never knew) eucalyptus. Aromatic shrubs—thyme, sage, bay, mint, rosemary, lavender—cluster thickly over the hillside; the area of the spring forms a cool and delightful oasis that exactly matches Ovid's description.

'Mercurial Cephalus' (725): 'mercurial' as the son of Hermes (Roman Mercury).

747–68 Once again, as at several key points in this book (e.g. lines 25–6, 99–100, 499–500) Ovid uses the sailing image (747–8) to mark a completed stage in his instruction: cf. my note on 467–8, p. 395, where the chariot metaphor serves a similar function. Here, not surprisingly—since it forms a prelude to specifically sexual instruction, 769ff.—we find an obvious double entendre. The 'bare facts of the case' (*nudis rebus*) are, in every sense, 'naked matters': indeed at this stage we may, if we will, see the entire recurrent metaphor in sexual terms (boat = penis, harbour = vagina).

It has often been implied that in this section women receive more or less the same advice, *mutatis mutandis*, as men (AA 1.229–52, 565–602) on the subject of dinner-parties: i.e. that liquor can help get

things going, but should only be used in moderation. This is true as far as it goes, but completely ignores the striking contrast in Ovid's approach to the female sex. Lines 751–4 offer a neat and amusing reversal of AA 1.245–50. While men are warned against deceptive half-light, women are urged to cultivate it. Then we recall that there were good reasons for such advice: cf. lines 251–80, with my note, p. 346, on Ovid's distaste for their physical attributes. What follows amply confirms this impression. Ovid may warn men against drinking too much, but he does not expect them to become dead drunk; nor does he anywhere feel called upon to remind them that gross gorging of food in public is unattractive. On the other hand, he spends a good deal of time instructing them on how to be the (seductive) life and soul of the party: 1.569–88, 595–610. Women get no such hints on how to attract or amuse; instead they are told, briefly, (i) not to slurp and gobble (755–60), and (ii) not to pass out in a stupor at the table (761–8). In both cases (759–60, 765) the unattractiveness of such habits is stressed; in the second, the danger of sexual advances which the girl is in no state to resist.

769–808 This passage should be considered in conjunction with AA 2.703–32, 669–74, where sexual advice, of an equally stylized and perfunctory sort, is offered to men (cf. my note, pp. 380–81). Unlike the men, who are merely told, in passing (AA 2.679), that positions for intercourse are numerous, women are advised which ones to choose, in accordance with their individual endowments or flaws.

809–12 These lines form a shorter, more perfunctory echo of the valedictory coda at the end of Bk 2 (see lines 733–44, with my note, p. 381), topped and tailed with identical, or near-identical, phrases ('My task/sport is ended', 'Ovid was my guide'). They are also mischievously allusive, with verbal echoes of the coda to Bk 2 of Virgil's *Georgics* (541–2), where the poet declares: '*High time to turn loose our steaming horses*'. What is more, the *praeceptor amoris*, having used this image at regular intervals to emphasize (a) his control and (b) the progress of the work (see my notes on AA 2.425ff., p. 375, and 3.467–8, p. 395), now, at the very last moment, reveals that his imposing chariot is drawn, not by horses but by *swans*, as was that of Venus. Propertius made a similar claim (3.3.39); but it took Ovid to introduce swans where his readers had been conditioned to expect Virgilian horses, and thus to end on a note of subtle, but absolutely characteristic, literary deflation. The grandiose claims expressed in the earlier coda are here cut down to size, and the Automedon of Love makes his exit, grinning, behind a gaggle of long-necked birds.

1–10 The proem to the *Remedia Amoris* closely parallels that to Bk 3 of the AA: in both Ovid offers to provide a new class of person with rational weapons for the love-game. The poem's title is implicit in the opening couplet (which otherwise would be meaningless to the reader), and the by now familiar military metaphor (love = warfare) at once picks up a whole range of earlier references. Diomedes son of Tydeus (5–6), in the fighting before Troy, wounded Aphrodite (Venus), who was carried out of the fighting to Olympus by Ares (Mars) in his chariot; she was, of course, the mother of Eros (Cupid) whom Ovid is here addressing. He is also consciously echoing his own previous reference at *Am.* 1.7.31.

The contrast between instinct (*impetus*) and rule (*ratio*) expressed in line 10 lies at the heart of Ovid's erotic-didactic poetry, as we have seen throughout the AA. Uncontrolled—and uncontrollable—passion is the motif that distinguishes his elegiac predecessors. This attitude Ovid consistently attacks and ridicules, most, often by skilful use of agricultural, hunting or, in the RA, medical metaphor. Love, for him, is most often only regarded as a kind of intellectual game subject to specific ground-rules; but it also, significantly, implies a fundamental lack of *ratio* in women.

11–22 Ovid's claim *not* to be writing a recantation or palinode (11–12) is a perfectly legitimate assertion. He is not attacking Love as such, but rather those unfortunate or inappropriate passions, dictated by *impetus* without benefit of *ratio*, that tend to get Eros a bad name among the uninformed. (That he expected hostile critics to tag him with the 'palinode theory', however, is clear not only from this passage but also from 379–96 below.) In other words, just as the two books of advice to men were followed by one offering counter-precepts for women, so the AA as a whole, with its instructions to both sexes on achieving, and maintaining, successful relationships is balanced by the RA, which offers, similarly, counter-precepts on how both men and women (49–52) can avoid a bad (i.e. uncontrolled) involvement, or get out of one that has gone wrong. Ovid's careful exculpation of Eros (20ff.) in cases of tragedy, most often suicide, induced by unruly passions is thus, on his own terms, perfectly logical. Love cannot be held responsible for irrational excesses in the individual.

By entering the sphere of cures and antidotes Ovid was able to add a fresh dimension to his didactic parody—that of medicine. Throughout the RA the narrator's *persona* is, more often than not, that of a doctor: see, e.g., 43–4, 76, 109, 115, 313, 525–8, 546, 795. Nor is he restricted simply to reversing advice previously given in the AA: no more than 16 out of a total of 42 precepts fall into this category. For

Eros as ‘peace-lover’ cf. *Am.* 1.10.15, AA 1.10. The paradox of consistently expressing pacific habits in terms of bellicose imagery perhaps hints at an unresolved conflict in Ovid’s emotional attitude to his subject. 23–40 Ovid is still defending Cupid and seeking his approval for the present undertaking. He has raised the charge of indirect murder only to dispose of it here: ‘You *could* have used your arrows to kill—but they remain clean of bloodshed.’ Some people, Ovid concedes, do die as a result of star-crossed passions, but Cupid is not responsible: he could, had he so wished, have used his arrows for this purpose, but chose otherwise.

Cupid’s stepfather is Mars: see *Am.* 1.2.24, with my note, p. 270. To claim that no mother was ever bereaved as a result of Venus’ wiles (29–30) suggests a sly tongue-in-cheek piece of flattery, since the most notorious evidence to the contrary was provided by Ovid’s own favourite mythical *exemplum*, the Trojan War, in the person of Helen.

41–8 Ovid is here employing a traditional mode of exposition that goes back as far as Hesiod: the lessons imparted to the poet by a god in epiphany are then passed on, as vatic utterance, to the public. For the Telephus myth and its magical implications see *Am.* 2.9.7, with my note, p. 298.

49–52 These lines look like an afterthought, or aside, and I have bracketed them in my translation, since though Ovid goes on to discuss, among others, Phyllis and Medea, nevertheless his main interest throughout the book (as in the rest of his erotic poems) is with the sexual problems and aspirations of men. The claim (50) to be ‘giving arms to both sides’ reminds us that the battle of the sexes is just that (cf. AA 2.741, 3.1ff., 667f., and below, 675f.), but there can be no doubt, despite his professions of impartiality, where Ovid’s true sympathies lay.

55–68 All the *exempta* chosen by Ovid in this section are familiar from earlier use, including Phyllis, Dido and Paris (for a very similar catalogue see *Am.* 2.18.21–38), and form part of that carefully orchestrated *da capo* effect with which Ovid linked the thematic and illustrative material in his erotic corpus. Phyllis’ desertion by Demophoon is treated at length in *Her.* 2; we have already encountered the episode at *Am.* 2.18.22 (cf. my note, p. 308, for details of the myth), and Ovid reworks it yet again below, at 591–608, where the reference—mysterious unless one knows the story—to her ninth retreading of that fatal path is elucidated (see pp. 256–7). Not only Phyllis, but also Dido and Medea are treated at AA 3.33–40, while Myrrha (referred to below, 99–100), Pasiphaë, Scylla and Phaedra all figure in AA 1.283–340. The story of Tereus and Philomela (‘so rudely forc’d’) appears in the *Amores* (2.6.7–10: see my

note, p. 295), while Paris and Helen get two epistles between them (*Her.* 16 and 17). For Dido's unfortunate relationship with Aeneas see *Virg. Am.* Bk 4, esp. lines 410–11 (verbally echoed here) and 641ff. on her suicide. *Medea: Am.* 2.14.32 (verbally echoed at line 60), *AA* 1.336, and my note, p. 349. Pasiphaë is analysed at length in *AA* 1.289ff. (see my note, p. 348, for the myth and further reff.); for Phaedra see *Am.* 2.18.30, and *AA* 1.338, with my notes, p. 308 and 349.

69–74 The self-advertisement of the *praeceptor amoris*, the emphasis on rational control, the nautical image—all these are characteristic, and, we find, equally applicable to remedy as to promotion in the love-game. The legal phraseology ('public deliverer', 'rod that proclaims your freedom') that Ovid, uniquely among Augustan poets, exploits as a metaphor, refers to the process known as *vindicatio in libertatem*, that normally accompanied the freeing of slaves. The deliverer (*assertor*) would touch the person to be freed with the rod (*vindicta*) as a symbol of manumission.

75–8 For similar invocations at the beginning of earlier books cf. *AA* 1.30 and 2.15: the appeal to Apollo also picks up the god's earlier epiphany at *AA* 2.493–510: cf. my note, p. 376.

93–106 The didactic is always in danger of sliding into the pit of aphoristic sententiousness, a hazard Ovid does not always manage to avoid. 'Don't put off till tomorrow what you can do now'—the advice is perennial. For Myrrha's incest with her father, and subsequent metamorphosis into a myrrh-tree (99–100) see *AA* 1.283–8 and my note, p. 347. Ovid visualizes a still-human Myrrha somehow hidden, in shame, behind the tree's bark, through which her gummy tears ooze—a fundamentally comic (and typically Ovidian) visual conceit for which there are numerous typological parallels.

107–34 If the disease cannot be nipped in the bud, then wait till its fury has subsided. True to his role as metaphorical doctor, Ovid is here borrowing a commonplace from ancient medical theory, that of the 'opportune moment' (*kairós, occasio*): with lines 131–4 compare the parenthetical reference to this practice at *AA* 1.357, where we read of doctors awaiting the propitious time to apply their medicines.

Philoctetes (111–14), one of Helen's original suitors and leader of the Olizonians against Troy, was bitten on the foot by a snake while at sacrifice on an Aegean island (Tenedos, Chryse or Lemnos: accounts differ); the wound suppurated, and emitted so unpleasant a smell that Philoctetes was marooned on Lemnos, where he spent the ten years of the Trojan War. After this time, however, Calchas (or Helenus) prophesied that the war could not be won without Philoctetes and his

bow (a gift from Heracles). Odysseus and Diomedes thereupon fetched Philoctetes from Lemnos; either Machaon or Podalirius at last cured his wound, and he shot Paris. The capture of Troy soon followed. Lines 121–2 recall AA 2.181–2, where the same image is used, in almost identical words, to make the same point about swimming across a river.

135–50 Ovid was neither the first nor (most certainly) the last writer to deprecate leisure (*otium*) as a promoter of loose morals. As he says, eliminate leisure, and the love-game tends to get squeezed out (or at the very least severely restricted) by that simple fact (139–40). The argument here is that of the traditional Roman conservative for whom ‘leisure’ and ‘idleness’ are terms of abuse; the reader will recall, as he was meant to, that elsewhere Ovid had argued a precisely opposite case: see *Am.* 1.15, with my introductory note and further reff. Much of the pleasure—and force—of the *RA* derives from this rational, quasi-behaviourist and, above all, *reversible* manipulation of the human psyche.

Why does the plane-tree (141) rejoice in wine? According to Pliny (*HN* 12.8), ‘their growth is encouraged by having wine poured on them’. Since plane-trees, then as now, were regularly grown outside inns to provide cool shade for *al fresco* drinkers, and, in addition, often had trailing vines trained over their branches, it is not hard to see how the association arose.

151–68 The ‘respectable’ professions—lawyer, politician, soldier and (below, 169ff.) gentleman farmer—are all, predictably, trotted out here as handy diversions for the love-lorn, in Ovid’s eyes their only legitimate function. The allusion to Gaius’ recent Parthian expedition (for a detailed account see AA 1.177–228, and my note, pp. 342ff.) is particularly sardonic. Gaius, the Imperial protégé notable mainly for his untried youth (*pueritia*), did not fight a successful campaign: with the help of experienced advisers he merely negotiated a far-from-romantic concordat. The ‘glorious triumph’ (155) is thus set in its true perspective: Gaius’ death (AD 4) merely gave an added twist to the passage, which Ovid, at the time of composition, could not have anticipated. This, of course, helps to date the *RA*: if Ovid is not being overtly cynical in 155–8, news of the concordat (signed 1 May AD 2, on the Euphrates) had not yet reached Rome when he wrote these lines. Even so, his conclusion is cool enough: the best, clearly, that this Parthian settlement can achieve is parity of value with a lover’s victory over his own unruly passions. The idea of a ‘trophy’ in the imagery of erotic warfare seems to be Ovid’s own. For the wounding of Aphrodite (Venus) by Diomedes see above, line 5, and my note, p. 403. The Roman anachronistic touches in Ovid’s account of Aegisthus’

seduction of Clytemnestra add their own flavour: Argos is seen as a kind of mini-Rome, complete with Forum.

169–98 The farmer's life offered Ovid an ideal diversion from affairs of the heart. It was an all-seasons occupation (187ff.) that made constant, and heavy, demands on anyone who took it up; it also had its own stylized pastoral charm, well brought out in this passage, and reinforced by the influential encomia of Virgil and Tibullus. Unlike the latter poet, Ovid had not been in the habit of picturing the country as an ideal place to make love; his attitude was rather that of Browning's smart Italian in 'Up in the City, Down at the Villa', who preferred to admire the countryside from the vantage-point of a populous city-square. Thus there was nothing to stop him using rural life as an *antidote* to passion, rather than as a backdrop, in the Tibullan manner, for a kind of non-stop erotic *fête champêtre*.

199–212 Pity the poor rentier, whose mind obstinately keeps running on sex: without a hard day's work to drain his energies and divert his mind, substitute activities become all the more essential. Hunting is as good an occupation as any: no worse than the Victorian cult of team-sports and cold baths, and, from a Roman viewpoint, preferable to farming, since the latter was under the patronage of Ceres (Demeter), an ultra-fecund deity, while the hunter-like Hippolytus, hopefully chaste—could invoke the aid of that professional virgin Diana (Artemis). The phrase for 'sound sleep' in 206, *pingui quiete*, has slightly ironic associations, since at *Am.* 1.13.7 the same epithet is used to describe post-coital dawn slumbers, and this is not likely, in Ovid's case, to be coincidental. It is also worth remembering that Ovid in the *AA*, as we have seen, regularly employs hunting imagery to describe the pursuit of women, and that a passage immediately before that recalled in the next section (*AA* 1.391–4) refers successively to fowling, boar-hunting and fishing. Note that the student is required to 'unlearn' (*dediscis*) his passion, in a converse process clearly regarded as analogous to that of acquiring the seductive techniques outlined in the *AA*.

213–24 Cicero recommends a change of scene as beneficial for the love-sick, as for any other convalescent invalid. Ovid is more specific: let the victim put as many miles as he can, as quickly as possible, between himself and the object of his affections. What we have here, in fact, is the reversal of the situation in *Am.* 2.16 or 3.16, when Ovid is parted from his mistress, and pondering ways and means to get to her or have her come to him. There is a deliberate allusion to earlier advice at 219–20, when Ovid's half-unwilling student is shown offering various excuses for not leaving Rome: days of ill-omen, foreign sabbaths. The alert reader will at once recall that passage in

AA Bk 1 where our prospective suitor is being taught on which days to advance his cause (399ff., esp. 413–16), on which to avoid committing himself. Two occasions regarded as propitious were, precisely, the Jewish Sabbath and that same ‘black day’ mentioned here, 18 July, the anniversary of Rome’s defeat on the banks of the river Allia by the Gauls in 390 BC (cf. my note, p. 352). One advantage such *dies atri* had for the suitor was that on them the shops were shut, and presents therefore unobtainable. Now they are being used as an excuse for not travelling. At 155 (cf. my note, p. 407) the fugitive Parthian was, however ironically, treated as cause for a Roman triumph; here he is made the synonym (‘so far’) for safe escape from an enemy. The reader is also left with a mildly ridiculous second image in mind, since ‘Parthian flight’ automatically evokes the trick (cf. AA 1.211, 3.786—the latter in a sexual context) of shooting backwards at pursuers, and we cannot but picture Ovid’s retreating lover stopping, every now and then, to loose off an antaphrodisiac arrow in the general direction of some hotfoot deserted mistress, hell-bent on his recapture. This effect, too, I am certain, was not accidental.

225–48 The clichés of the doctor (‘to recover health demands much suffering’, etc.) are neatly articulated to evocative phrases used earlier in a very different, and most often erotic, context (cf. lines 523ff. below, where the theme is repeated *da capo*). As a guarantee of experience Ovid here (227–8), as later (313–14), admits to having himself endured the sickness he describes, and to having employed his own remedies (311–12, 356, 715–16, 768). Note that the reader to whom Ovid addresses himself is assumed to possess the kind of private income that will facilitate extended travel abroad (237ff.). A plug for the pleasures of travel (241–2) is, incidentally, very rare in the ancient world—and with good reason. The image of passion as a fire, which can die away to mere embers (244), is repeated from AA 2.439ff., and had traditional antecedents in Hellenistic poetry; cf. lines 731ff. below.

249–90 Ovid’s advice against employing magic, for whatever purpose, is a recurrent theme: we first encountered it at AA 2.99–106 (see my note, pp. 366–7), and shall meet it again at *MF* 35–42. As before, he makes a sharp distinction here between the illegitimate magic of spells and drugs, and the true magic of inspired poetry (251–2), with a conscious metaphorical play on the ambiguous semantics of the word *carmen*. He also, interestingly, repeats, with variations, his two mythical *exempla*, i.e. Circe and Medea (on whom cf. AA 2.101–4). These two ladies fit far less well into the present context than the earlier one. It is true that in both instances Ovid’s main point is

identical, i.e. that their magic simply failed to work, that the witch-physician could not heal herself. But whereas in the *An Medea* and Circe are depicted, quite naturally, as exerting all their wiles (with whatever success) to retain the affections of Jason and Ulysses respectively, here—since *cures* for love are now the order of the day—Medea must perform spells to stop Jason taking her away from Colchis (261–2), while Circe is made to deploy somewhat perfunctory charms and potions against the onset of passion (267–8, 287–8) at a time when that passion has, clearly, long been a *fait accompli*. The belief that magic could be used to extinguish as well as to induce desire was widespread in antiquity. It is hard to resist the conclusion that here Ovid simply adapted, out of strict context, some ready-to-hand material from working stock.

291–310 If withdrawal techniques are out of the question (after all, *some* people have to stay in Rome), then try, Ovid suggests, a little home-made aversion therapy. The imagined monologue of his model student (301–6) is revealing: we are back in the familiar world of presents begrudged and sexual favours denied (cf. *Am.* 1. 10 *passim*, and AA 3.461–6, with my notes, pp. 280–81 and 394), and at once recall a very similar earlier passage (AA 1.419ff., with my note, p. 352), which even repeats that perennial figure of sexual experiment and fantasy, the travelling pedlar or door-to-door salesman (*institor*). It is equally suggestive that 309–10, a couplet promoting the notion that suffering makes for spontaneous eloquence, should be so close a verbal echo of AA 1.609–10, where precisely the same result is attributed to brisk courtship. Passion of whatever sort, Ovid seems to be saying, promotes fluency, and can thus be used impartially either to make or unmake a sexual liaison.

311–30 The process of reversal is both detailed and neat. ‘Habit breeds tolerance’, the student is told at AA 2.647: ‘time heals each physical blemish’ (653), ‘labels minimize feelings’ (657). However, he is now reminded (*RA* 323), ‘evil and good are near neighbours’, a proposition repeated, with reversed emphasis, from AA 2.662, and a familiar *topos*. Precisely. Euphemisms (AA 2.657) must now be turned inside-out (*RA* 325–6). The lover should think of his girl as ugly even if she isn’t, a dumpy creature with bad arms and legs (317–20). He should reflect on how much she costs him (321–2)—a charge, significantly, which gets no factual rebuttal (see above, my note on 291–310, and cf. *Am.* 1.10.63). Ovid then gets down to naming names, and the straight reversals come thick and fast: 327 = 661 + 657–8 (plumpness, swarthy); 328 = 660 (thinness); 329–30 = *Am.* 2.4.13 (*rustiditas* v. sophistication). The latter passage reminds us of another twist to the joke. Several of the qualities described by Ovid

in the RA as antipathetic figure in the *Amores* as erotic attractions, e.g. diminutive stature (RA 321: *Am.* 2.14.35) or a swarthy complexion (RA 327: *Am.* 2.14.40). For the connotations of *rustiditas*, equated by Ovid with prudishness or naivety, see my note on AA 1.659–72, pp. 359–60. Beauty, as we know, lies in the eye of the beholder; Ovid is simply rationalizing this proposition into an all-purpose instrument for self-advancement or self-protection. As so often, he is, in effect, talking exclusively to men: Ovid's girl-students are not encouraged to analyse their male lovers' physical charms.

331–56 The utilization of various earlier precepts, culled from the AA and then switched round for a reverse effect, here reaches its climax. The examples chosen fall into two closely correlated categories: (a) forcing the girl to expose her worst physical traits and most conspicuous areas of incompetence; (b) invading her privacy before she has, in every sense, put on her 'public face'.

The 'Harpies' feast' (356) refers to the blinding by the gods of Phineus, King of Salmydessus in Thrace, for the circumstances of which see my note (p. 349) on AA 1.339. As an additional punishment he was afflicted with insatiable hunger. Whenever he sat down to eat, however, Harpies would swoop from the sky and snatch his meal. By way of adding insult to injury, they would foul the table with their droppings as they flew off, and any food left behind stank so revoltingly—either because of the droppings, or else through divine fiat—that it was quite inedible.

357–98 Ovid now proposes to offer his reader one or two antaphrodisiac tips applicable during sexual intercourse: it is, I think, significant that his cures for love tend to involve, not less sex, but a good deal more, ranging from voyeurism (437–8) to a second mistress (441ff.). But at this point he recalls (361ff.) that sexually explicit or morally questionable passages in the AA have lately earned him a good deal of criticism. After the Julian scandal of 2 BC this is not surprising. Women were, in fact, being prosecuted for adultery about this time. In a brief digression (361–95) Ovid sets about countering his critics' arguments. First, he claims not to care about such attacks, since he enjoys universal fame and popularity (363–4). Second, he attributes any hostility to envy on the part of unsuccessful literary rivals (365–70: another classic line of defence). Thirdly, he argues (371–88) that if his form and style are appropriate to his subject-matter, the charge against him fails by definition—a presumption that might appeal to art-for-art's-sakers, but would hardly satisfy a Catonian moralist. He concludes (389–96) with a triumphant and self-confident snub to his enemies: they have, he claims, mistimed their attack, since he is only now getting into his stride, more and better

poems are on the way, and in the end elegy's debt to him will be acknowledged to rival that of epic to Virgil.

This defence is outrageous, not least because it so gratuitously begs a moral question in literary terms. Granted that a wanton (*proterva*) Muse calls for wanton expression, what obligation has Ovid to choose such a subject in the first place? The implication is that a poet can turn his hand to any genre, and his *protervitas* is simply a manner adopted for the moment because of literary considerations. Even the familiar claim (383–6, cf. AA 1.31, 2.599ff., 3.27, with my note, pp. 599–600) that the audience for the AA and the RA is restricted to freedwomen and courtesans rings speciously hollow; while the piling up of examples to illustrate the suitability of different metres and genres for different themes (371ff.) flattens a minor argument with rhetorical overkill. Ovid, in short, is very much on the defensive, and as a result protesting too much, in the wrong way.

The promise of 357–8 is picked up at 399ff. With 359–60 cf. *Am.* 1.5.25–6: it is ironic that Ovid should have been criticized for indecorousness, since the mechanics of intercourse (and to a great extent the act *per se*) clearly bore him. Pursuit is all.

'Some critics' (361) are later, it seems, reduced to one individual (371, *tu*; 391, *properas*): we do not know who this person was. The 'envious scholar' (365) was Zoilus, a 4th cent. BC Cynic philosopher from Amphipolis, known as Homeromastix ('the scourge of Homer') for his vigorous critical attacks on the poet, whom he faulted chiefly for introducing fabulous or otherwise incredible matter into his work. The 'impious tongues' that attacked the *Aeneid* (367–8) did not wait until Virgil was dead. A *vita* preserved by Donatus, and probably from the *De Viris Illustribus* (*On Famous Men*) of Suetonius, ends with a brief but intriguing account of various charges brought against Virgil—the chief ones being affectation of language and literary plagiarism.

With the introduction of Thais (383–6) Ovid gives his argument a fresh self-exculpatory twist. A famous courtesan of the 4th cent. BC, and the reputed companion of Alexander the Great, Thais passed into literature as the stylized *meretrix* of New Comedy, and thence was taken up at Rome by Terence (e.g. in *The Eunuch*) and Plautus. When Ovid claims that 'Thais belongs to my Art' (385) he is, not over-subtly, justifying his earlier erotic-didactic poetry. Just as the various genres have their own metres, so they also are restricted in the characters they present. For the *libertinae* and *meretrices* who (supposedly) form his audience, Ovid claims, and bearing in mind the nature of his poetry, Thais is a proper and legitimate subject for study. In other words, the only criterion is to be one of *literary propriety* (387–8).

As We have seen (Intro. pp. 70ff., and A A 3.611–16, pp. 397–8), all this is specious eyewash. Whatever he may have claimed, Ovid was in fact aiming at a readership of upper-class Roman matrons (cf. *Am.* 1.4, with my introductory note, pp. 271–2); and in any case the social availability of married freedwomen was not quite what he would have us believe. The whole passage is tinged with that bright unreality, at once sophisticated and naïve, which cannot properly distinguish between literature and life, a failure liable (in Ovid's case as in Oscar Wilde's) to have tragic consequences.

399–440 After this digression, Ovid returns to the study of aversion techniques. Four specific recommendations are offered. While they conform, in general terms, to his advice (made on the basis of personal experience) at 315—that is, ‘concentrate on your mistress's bad points’—they are all associated with the sexual act. Ovid clearly believed in the paradoxical principle of *sauter pour mieux reader*. The student anxious to rid himself of an unwelcome passion should (i) make love to another girl first: this will take the edge off his desire (401–4); (ii) choose an uncomfortable and indecorous position for intercourse (women, he adds, are so conceited that they think *any* posture flatters them: 407–10); (iii) open the windows and perform in broad daylight (411–12); (iv) immediately after orgasm, when a lover's mood is, or should be, one of satiated disgust, scrutinize all his mistress's physical blemishes with particular care (413–18). Other things, he adds, can turn some men off: the sight of the girl's private parts prior to climax (429–30), or tell-tale stains on the bedsheet afterwards (431–2)—but no one affected by such trifles can count himself seriously in love (433–6). It is also possible to try shock-aversion, e.g. by secretly watching your mistress defecate (437–8), a notion that would have appealed to Swift; Ovid concedes that such tactics may work, but blushes to recommend them (439–40).

441–88 Ovid now turns to his main recommendation for getting an overmastering passion out of one's system—the acquisition of a second mistress to dilute the impact of the first, redemption from fire by fire. In the *Amores* (2.10) Ovid himself claimed at one point to be enamoured of two girls simultaneously, and to find it an enjoyable, if exhausting, experience: there are deliberate echoes of this poem in the present passage.

The image of fishing (448) as a metaphor for the pursuit of love is perennial (‘as many good fish in the sea as ever came out of it’, etc.), and picked up at the end of this section with the charming conceit (488) of a boat loaded down with, hooked girls: cf. also AA 1.48, 393, 763; 3–425. At 449–50, as *u* AA 2.539–40, Ovid applies the image of a triumphant consul on the Capitol to a lover; there, to one who puts up

with a rival, here, to one who takes two mistresses. Whether either reference has political colouring is hard to determine: perhaps it is merely an example of a metaphor appropriate to 'erotic warfare' (*militia amoris*: cf. *Am.* 1.7.35ff.).

We have already met Cephalus' eccentric wife Procris (see *AA* 3.687ff. and my note, pp. 399ff): her affair with Minos was, to say the least, *outr*'. She fled to him in Crete after being caught by her husband in an adulterous relationship. Minos, eager to seduce her (and clearly convinced that on her track-record she would be an easy conquest), gave her a hunting-dog, Laelaps, that caught whatever it pursued, and a magical javelin that never missed its mark. Procris, presumably, was left to infer that the donor himself would prove equally irresistible.

On Phineus (454) see *AA* 1.339 and *RA* 355, with my notes, pp. 349 and 411. His first wife, Cleopatra, bore him two sons, Plexipus and Pandion: his second, Idaea, the traditional wicked stepmother, accused the boys of attempting her seduction. For the family background of Alcmaeon (455–6) see *Am.* 1.10.51–2, and my note, p. 282. After the capture of Thebes, Alcmaeon killed his mother Eriphyle for her treachery, went temporarily mad (being hounded, like Orestes in similar circumstances, by the Furies), was purified by Phegeus at Psophis, and married Phegeus' daughter Alpheisiboea or Arsinoë. After a further purification by the river-god Acheloüs, Alcmaeon transferred his affections to the god's daughter Callirhoë ('Beautiful Stream'), and was subsequently murdered by his first father-in-law's servants. Ovid's account suggests, without quite saying so, that Alcmaeon had both girls in the same bed at once: I have tried to catch this innuendo in my translation. Oenone, the nymph of Mt Ida (today perhaps best known from Tennyson's poem of that name) was married to Paris, who deserted her for Helen. She also had the gift of prophecy, and not only warned Paris against Helen, but also knew that if he was ever wounded only she herself could heal him. When Paris was shot by Philoctetes he appealed to Oenone for help; in her bitterness she refused. He died, and Oenone then hanged herself out of remorse. For the story of Tereus, Procne and Philomela see my note on *Am.* 2.6.7–10, p. 295.

The final and longest example admirably demonstrates Ovid's penchant for trivializing and ridiculing myth. It is also, strictly considered, irrelevant to the main point being made, since Agamemnon hardly demanded Achilles' prize in order to cure his own hopeless passion for Chryses' daughter, but rather to satisfy his own touchy pride, what a modern Greek would call his *philótimo*. Ovid uses the incident to justify his erotic strategy (if Agamemnon can

legitimately steal another man's girl, a mythic precedent has been established), and also exploits it, with some skill, for its inherent low comedy: the *mise-en-scène*, as he presents it, resembles something by Menander.

Ovid's attitude to the distress of Chryses (Horn. *Il.* 1.12. ff.) is pragmatic and derisive: if his daughter was lucky enough to catch the eye of the C-in-C, so much the better for both of them (469–72). For Thersites (482) see my note on *Am.* 2.6.39–42, p. 296. The paradoxical quality of Ovid's advice, in a poem supposedly devoted to *curing* passion, is crystallized at 487–8, where—anxious to help students seeking substitute mistresses—the *praeceptor amoris* not only slips in a plug for the *An*, but visualizes his reader sailing harbour-wards with a whole trawl of girls as a result of reading it.

489–522 From this point forward, Ovid's dependence upon the reversal or re-interpretation of his own earlier *praecepta* increases (cf. below, 577–8), while the influence of external sources such as Lucretius is less evident. With a polite nod to Apollo (whose support and inspiration he had evoked at 75–8, and whose own *praecepta* immediately precede a passage, *AA* 2.515ff., that Ovid is about to stand on its head), our erotic deprogrammer offers his next piece of practical psychological advice. Feign indifference even if indifferent is the last thing you feel; play it cool, be elusive (491ff.). This has at least two advantages: (i) if you fake an emotion persistently enough, it will very often become genuine (497ff.); (ii) such tactics (511–12) will very soon make your mistress abandon her own high-and-mighty ways. The basic notion promoted here is adapted from *AA* 1.611ff., where a suitor is advised to affect passion even though he may not feel it, with the parallel assurance (615–16) that he will probably end up genuinely in love as a result.

But it has a further calculated effect: it undercuts the whole artificial structure of *servitium amoris*, the lover as abject and devoted slave. At *AA* 2.515–34 Ovid advised the desperate lover to suffer all insults, blows included, with patience, to spend uncomfortable nights outside his loved one's door, to go through each demeaning hoop traditionally required of the *exclusus amator*. Here, however, he not only takes a diametrically opposite line (505ff.) but makes it very clear (511–12) that by calling the lady's bluff and ignoring her gambits (517–22) a prospective lover can in fact make her a great deal more malleable. *Don't* lie outside her door, he says now; ignore her, break dates, look incorrigibly cheerful, play hard to get. By modern standards (and I find it hard to believe that the same notion had not occurred to Ovid) these are far more effective techniques for taming a mistress than for alienating or discarding her. Ovid would probably

argue that, by applying such techniques, the lover saddled with an obdurate mistress had a double option. If they did not soften up the lady (which they well might) at least they would help to get her victims off the hook.

For Ovid's careful avoidance of excessive social drinking (499) and its possible motivation, cf. AA 1.565ff. and 3.761ff., with my notes, pp. 356 and 402. There may well be a subtle, and typically Ovidian, joke implied here. One good reason not to drink too much at a dinner-party was, clearly, to keep an eye on your partner's behaviour: at *Am.* 1.4.51–4 Ovid instructs his mistress to ply her husband with wine in the hope of making him pass out over the fruit and nuts. Better still, at *Am.* 2.5.13–32 he describes what he saw going on between his girl and another man while he was *pretending to be asleep*. Surely we are meant to recall that scene here, and laugh at the thought of Ovid setting up a trap—only to nod off in the middle of it? 'I've laughed at the dupe –' he goes on (*deceptum risi*), and so does his audience.

523–42 'Could anyone', Ovid inquires, 'call my precepts too tough?' (523): clearly a rhetorical question, since at line 225 he had already predicted that indeed some people would do just that. For them, he offers another solution: aversion through systematic over-indulgence, killing the cat by drowning it in cream (5311ff.). The notion of every pleasure having its point of satiety (*taedium*, **κόρος**), beyond which it aroused only disgust, was as old as Homer, who instanced sleep and love-making. The immediate sources (both strongly indicative of Ovid's attitude to amatory pursuits in general) are *Am.* 2.19 (see esp. lines 3–4, 25ff.) and 3.4 (esp. 17–18, 25–6: for a detailed analysis see my introductory note to 3.4, pp. 315–16), where the thesis is maintained that erotic interest gains edge from frustration, is dissipated by satiety.

543–78 The love nurtured by diffidence (543–6) refers back to several earlier passages: AA 2.445, where the lover is advised to keep his mistress fearful and uncertain; AA 3–593ff., where similar advice is given, *mutatis mutandis*, to a mistress; and AA 3.579–80, which illuminates the connection between this passage and Ovid's previous argument by suggesting that such uncertainty is desirable in order to avoid boredom in a lover. Ovid once again reverses his own earlier precept: anxiety and jealousy, he reminds us, are not the best instruments for the exorcism of passion. Just as a loving mother worries most (547–8) over a son on active service, so an anxious lover will fret obsessively over possible infidelities (cf. *Am.* 3.14). Ovid's advice, therefore (543), is: 'Rid yourself of fear.' But how? The introduction of Lethaeian Love in a dream-epiphany suggests healing oblivion; but this oblivion is not achieved by a miraculous drink.

Instead, Ovid (preferring, as always, psychology to magic) recommends keeping the mind busy with other worries in order to crowd out any thought of love.

The temple of Venus Erycina near the Colline Gate (549–50) was a copy of the famous shrine on Mt Eryx in Sicily (for which cf. my note on *Am.* 3.9.45, p. 327): though it did not offer the latter's notorious temple-prostitutes (*hierodouloi*), it seems to have been, like so many foreign shrines (cf. *AA* 1.75–8, and my note, p. 341), an unofficial rendezvous for street-walkers, amateur tarts and young men on the make. Built as early as 181 BC, it was the scene of annual festivals on 23 April (the Vinalia, Ovid *Fast.* 4.871) and 24 October. The 'Lethaeon Love' was a statue of Eros. The text makes clear that this figure was attached to a fountain, probably in the large temple-portico, and spouted water, with symbolic appropriateness, on to its own torch. It seems safe to apply a modern, though traditional, analogy, and infer that young people were in the habit of throwing a coin in the fountain-basin, and praying for relief from troubles of the heart (553–4).

579–608 If leisure (*otium*) is to be avoided, then so, *a fortiori*, is solitude. Our modern assumptions on this topic differ radically from those of the ancient world. In certain circumstances we value solitude highly, whereas Mediterranean man did—and does—both fear and detest it. Thus we may have trouble in realizing that Ovid is here simply polishing up a familiar social cliché. An ancient lover, however, was thought of as being prone—among other lunacies—to solitary moping, of a noisy and complaining sort, especially at night. This, of course, reinforced the widespread belief that love was a form of insanity, since anyone who shunned human contact in this way had by definition to be off his head, and might well do himself, if not his neighbours, serious mischief. Hence, in this context, the cautionary tale of Phyllis and Demophöon.

As we have already had occasion to note (*Am.* 2.18.22, *AA* 2.353–4, 3–37-8, '459–60, *Her.* 2, *passim*, with my notes ad loc.), Ovid had an obsessional concern with this story of desertion and transformation. The myth was popular in antiquity. It is curious that Ovid did *not* use it where we might have expected him to, i.e. in the *Metamorphoses*. After Phyllis hanged herself she was turned into a leafless almond-tree, and when the remorseful Demophöon returned and embraced its trunk, it promptly burst into leaf. After her suicide, trees took root in her grave, and when their leaves withered and fell they were said to be mourning her: the myth clearly looks back to some sort of primitive vegetation ceremony. For the friendship between Orestes and Pylades (589) cf. my note on *AA* 1.745, P. 361. Ovid's use of this example in

such a context is, of course, a deadpan black joke. He is discussing cures for love: what, we ask ourselves, did Pylades do to help Orestes in this respect? That famous isolated outburst in Aeschylus' *Choephoroi* (900–903) gives the answer: he rallied his friend's faltering determination to kill Clytemnestra. Thus, in the example chosen, what we are considering is *mother-love*, and the cure turns out to be matricide! Such friends we should all have. It may well be that Phyllis would not have committed suicide with a faithful attendant there to dissuade her; but where was Pylades when Orestes fled from the Furies?

609–42 At this point Ovid begins the third, and last, main section of his 'Cures for Love', that dealing with the various dangers of relapse after an initial separation.

The medical analogy of contagion offers him considerable scope for metaphorical precept: if love is a disease, then contact with lovers must be avoided, and the 'patient' placed in a species of erotic quarantine. (Ovid enhances realism by giving what purport to be two 'case-histories' at this point.)

643–82 Ovid now offers four pieces of purely psychological or situational advice, of which the first, strictly considered, does not fall in the category of 'cures for love' at all: (i) Avoid over-protestation; better to keep quiet, since the man who insists he is not in love generally is (643–8); (ii) Phase out your passion gradually: dramatic ruptures are undesirable (649–54); (iii) Don't part in hatred: this is not only personally obnoxious, but implies (*exemplum* attached) that you are still really in love (655–72); (iv) If circumstances beyond your control bring you into her company, *then* is the time to use all the lessons you have been taught, and treat her as merely another casual acquaintance (673–82). In so far as the medical analogy still applies, Ovid is dealing with a rather shaky convalescent in danger of relapse. We may note, too, the increasing prevalence of psychological analysis at the expense of concrete illustration. Much of the psychology is sound: in particular, Ovid was well aware of the dangers inherent in what we have learnt to describe as a love-hate relationship, the Catullan *odi et amo* (85): cf. *Am.* 3.11B *passim*, which exemplifies, very strikingly, the close interrelationship between violence and passion. Studied indifference, in other words, offers a far better guarantee of erotic immunity than does fierce rejection, itself too often no more than passion-in-reverse; and whereas such rejection normally represents a sudden change of front, indifference must be worked for, calmly and unemotionally, over a long period.

'Venus of the Law-Courts' (660) was, appropriately enough in this context, Venus Genetrix, whose temple, with the Appian Fountain in

front of it, faced the Forum Iulii, where public litigation took place: see AA 1.81. The reference to Penthesilea, slain by Achilles at Troy (676), reminds us that Ovid had earlier (AA 2.743–4, 3.1–2) used the Amazons and their queen—revealingly—to represent women generally in the battle of the sexes. There are ironic undertones here, since in the act of spearing Penthesilea to death Achilles conceived a violent passion for her.

683–98 What, Ovid asks, are the main hazards working against speedy emotional disentanglement? First, hopeful self-conceit on the part of the men (685–6): they, like their female counterparts (AA 1.613–14), cannot believe themselves unattractive. The psychology, if simple, is shrewd. Second, the range of devious and deceitful tricks women can deploy to win back reluctant lovers (687ff.), against which silence, rather than counter-argument (which can often, 697–8, prove counter-productive), is at times the only effective weapon. Ovid's remarks about separation (693ff.) should be read with his previous example of the young husband bent on prosecuting his wife (663ff.) closely in mind. We should note that though the term *divortium* (693) can sometimes be used to indicate a separation in the general sense, more often it carries the specific connotation of legal divorce, and it looks very much as though this is what Ovid has in mind here. The advice contained in lines 693–8 is shrewd: it could well be given by any worldly-wise solicitor today. If you want to avoid a relapse into infatuation, Ovid says in effect, you must not only ignore the lady's persuasive attempts at reconciliation but also avoid spelling out your own attitude, since she will simply use your arguments to improve her own (revised) case—and then convert you to it.

707–24 After a brief digression, Ovid returns to his list of do's and don't's for the man who has managed an initial break with his mistress, but remains emotionally vulnerable. Make detailed comparisons, he advises, between your ex-lover and a few really stunning fashion-plate models (707–14: once again we note the assumption—cf. AA 3.261ff.—that Ovid's readers do not, by definition, pick really attractive women), and you will soon find her an embarrassment—unless, of course (714, a typically Ovidian touch), you allow love to warp your judgement. Don't read her old letters: better to burn them (715–22). Get rid of all portraits (723–4). The advice, if commonplace, is sound. Amyclae (707) was a village near Sparta, on the banks of the Eurotas, where the festival of the Hyacinthia took place, and widely celebrated for its purple-dye industry: the murex shellfish, from which the dye was extracted, flourished (then as now) off the shores of Laconia.

The letters that Ovid tells his reader to burn (715–22) are, of

course, those that he earlier advised the ladies to write (AA 3.469ff., with my note, p. 395). Despite his strictures against magic (AA 2.99ff., with my note, pp. 366–7), Ovid seems here (719–20) to hint at a recognizable spell (ritual accompanied by formulaic phrase), operating on the sympathetic principle of *similia pro similibus*, and designed to burn away passion, as though it were a corpse on the funeral pyre, by consigning to the flames the love-letters in which that passion had been expressed. Althaea, daughter of Thestius, King of Aetolia, had, by Oeneus, a son, Meleager. When the boy was seven days old the Fates declared that as soon as the log burning on Althaea's hearth was finally consumed Meleager would die. Althaea at once removed the log from the fire and put it away for safety in a chest. Later, when Meleager was a grown man, he quarrelled with his mother's brothers after the hunting of the Caledonian boar (they resented his giving the skin to Atalanta), and slew them in a rage, at which Althaea put the log back in the fire, and Meleager in due course died. The myth is based on sympathetic magic of an unmistakable sort, and is precisely analogous to the recommendation that Ovid has just made. For Laodameia's marriage cf. my note on *Am.* 2.18.38, pp. 308–9, and also Ovid *Her.* 13–149ff. After the death of her husband Protesilaus at Troy, she had intercourse with a waxen effigy of him, till her father, discovering what she was about, had the image burnt, whereupon Laodameia, in a rather *outré* form of suttee, cast herself upon the bonfire, and so perished.

725–40 The unusually dense and varied imagery in this sequence—some of the best poetry Ovid ever wrote—conveys a sense of strong emotional pressure. Ovid knows, all too well, how delicate the scar-tissue on a cicatrized love-affair is liable to be, and just what nostalgic associations can reopen the wound (725–30). Besides this major metaphor he employs two others: the smouldering fire (731–4) and the perilous sea-journey (734–40). No other Roman poet, not even Propertius, dwells in quite this way on the psychological effect of background memories, the touchstones of recollected happiness. For earlier instances in Ovid himself see, e.g., *Her.* 10.51–8, 13.137–46. (We may note, incidentally, that each example concentrates, to the exclusion of all else, whether in boudoir or forest glade, on sexual intercourse: Ovid's sense of place is highly selective, and picks appropriate objects to express its associations: an unmade bed, a heap of dried leaves.)

The obscure allusion at 735–6 refers to the revenge taken by Nauplius for the rigged execution of his son Palamedes at Troy. Palamedes was the man who exposed Odysseus' feigned madness, and forced him to join the Trojan Expedition; by way of revenge Odysseus

later fabricated evidence that got Palamedes condemned to death as a traitor. Nauplius, after failing to obtain satisfaction from Agamemnon, not only encouraged all the Greek leaders' wives to cuckold their absent husbands (just how, we are not told), but set false lights on Mt Caphareus, a dangerous rocky promontory in south-east Euboea, so that the returning Greek fleet stood in for the shore at night, supposing the lights to mark a harbour, and suffered heavy losses through shipwreck. For Scylla and Charybdis see my note on *Am.* 3.12.21, p. 332. It is symbolically appropriate that the sailing metaphor which throughout the *AA* and the *RA* has designated the lover's progress (or regress)—see, e.g., *AA* 2.9–10, 427–34, 3.99–100; *RA* 119–22, 577–8—should here be closely linked to the voyages of Odysseus, great lover as well as great wanderer, who not only took on nymphs and goddesses (Calypso, Circe), but successfully ditched them when they became over-importunate or he had other calls on his time (cf. also 789–90 below). The quicksands of 739 are the Syrtes, for which see my note on *Am.* 2.11.18–20, p. 300; the 'perilous headland' is the proverbially storm-ridden Acroceraunian promontory in north Epirus, a by-word for dangerous navigation.

741–50 What Ovid has in mind is upper-class adultery, a notoriously expensive occupation. The gold-digging habits of the kept mistress form a recurrent leitmotiv in these poems, as we have seen (*Am.* 1.10, *AA* 1.419ff., 2.275ff., etc.): 'wealth', Ovid says, 'fosters wanton love' (746). Here he also returns, by implication, to another favourite theme of his: leisure (*otium*), that essential ingredient of cultivated seduction (see above, 135ff., with my note, p. 406). Promiscuity, in fact, requires both time and money. There is also a clear hint, conveyed in the choice of Phaedra and Pasiphaë as *exempla* (743–6), that the gratification of *outré* or perverse passions likewise tends to be the prerogative of the wealthy and leisured—a thesis for which some support could be found today in the jet-set world of Rome or California. To complete his sociological digression, Ovid picks (747–8) two contrasting mythological figures—the virtuous Hecale, the loud-mouthed beggar Irus—who have nothing in common save poverty, but, because of this, fail to attract willing partners in either love or (Ovid clearly implies) marriage. The paradoxical conclusion is clear: though lack of money remains *per se* a dismal condition, and one which no sane man could advocate (750), it does nevertheless constitute a remarkable amatory prophylactic.

Phaedra, the wife of Theseus, conceived a disastrous and unrequited passion for her aggressively chaste stepson Hippolytus: cf. my notes on *Am.* 2.4.32, p. 293, and *AA* 1.338, p. 349. On being rejected by him, she told Theseus that he had attempted to rape her.

Theseus, believing her, prayed to Poseidon (Neptune), who, according to some sources, was his father, to destroy Hippolytus. Poseidon sent a bull from the sea that panicked the boy's horses, overturned his chariot and thus caused him injuries from which he afterwards died. Ovid's emphasis on the idea of Neptune as Hippolytus' 'grand-daddy' exactly epitomizes his trivializing and ridiculing of myth. At 744 Ovid does not name Pasiphaë; he merely refers to the 'woman of Cnossos' (*Cnosida*)—who, of course, could equally well be Ariadne: the term undoubtedly refers to Ariadne at AA 1.527 (cf. 556) and *Her.* 15.25. But what is being described here are cases of *perverse* rather than merely unfortunate passion; and though Ariadne was deserted by Theseus, her affection for him seems to have been all too conventional. It is Pasiphaë, with her dark taurine appetites, who fits the present context to perfection (for Ovid's obsession with this myth see AA 1.289ff. and my note, p. 348); in fact we have already found her bracketed with Phaedra, as a joint illustration of unruly and exotic passion, earlier in the *RA* (lines 63–4). For the Homeric beggar Irus see *Od.* 18.1–116. Hecale (747) was an old woman who lived alone in a hut near Marathon, where she gave Theseus shelter.

751–66 Entertainments recommended in the *AA* as conducive to seduction or generally erotic in atmosphere are here listed, conversely, as danger-areas to avoid: (a) the theatre; (b) singing, dancing and the playing of musical instruments; (c) love-poetry. It is clear from the context that what Ovid has in mind at lines 753–6 is the immensely popular Roman ballet (*pantomimus*). 'Flutes, zithers and lyres' (752–3) formed the normal accompaniment to such performances. Like an Indian dancer such as Ram Gopal, performers in a Roman *pantomimus* would 'talk with their hands' and eloquently mime anything from the intercourse of Venus and Mars to Cronos eating his children. Ovid's own amatory poems were thus presented in the guise of ballets, and Augustus himself attended their performance (*Tr.* 2.519–20). There is a sexual double-entendre in 'shake your nerve' (*enervant*): *nervus* frequently = 'penis'.

The list of proscribed love-poets (757–66) coincides almost exactly with that recommended at AA 3.329–46 as suitable reading material for young ladies who aim to charm. Common to both, and in much the same order, are (a) Callimachus (759 = 329), (b) Philetas (760 = 329), (c) Sappho (761 = 331), (d) Anacreon (762 = 330), (e) Tibullus (763 = 334). (0 Propertius (764 = 333), (g) Gallus (765 = 334). 00 Ovid himself (776 = 339). The casual, almost throwaway, reference to his own work (766) is in striking contrast to Ovid's sedulous self-promotion at AA 3.339–48 (cf. my note, pp. 390–91) and elsewhere.

767–84 The point made here, that very often passion is only aroused by another man setting about one's present wife or prospective mistress, has already been hammered home to Ovid's readers a dozen times. Indeed, such associative references increase in density as the narrative develops. There is a structural and thematic neatness about these numerous echoes-in-reverse towards the close of the poem: in my end is my beginning. The effect is subtly enhanced by the mythical illustrations chosen, since these all look back to Ovid's earlier *Letters of Heroines* (*Heroides*): in *Her.* 8 Hermione writes to Orestes, Helen and Paris exchange letters in *Her.* 16–17, while Briseis makes her appeal to Achilles (sounding exactly like a ditched foreign *au pair* girl) in *Her.* 3. The closing mood is nostalgic and retrospective—appropriately enough, since after so many half-hearted attempts to change his poetic genre, Ovid was now, at last, on the point of breaking away from love-elegy for ever.

Hermione (771–2) was the daughter of Helen and Menelaus. While Menelaus was at Troy, her grandfather Tyndareus betrothed and married her to Agamemnon's son Orestes. Menelaus, in ignorance of this, meanwhile promised her to Achilles' son Neoptolemus. After the war Neoptolemus therefore took her from Orestes by force, though she was pregnant at the time. Neoptolemus was afterwards slain at Delphi either by Orestes himself or else by a Delphian accomplice of his. Menelaus (773–4), after entertaining Paris at Sparta, had to leave for Crete to attend a funeral (cf. my note on AA 2.357ff., p. 374).

Ovid picks up Agamemnon's quarrel with Achilles over Briseis from lines 467–86 above: besides being familiar from Homer, the story was popular with Roman elegists and a favourite of Ovid's (*Am.* 1.9.33, 2.8.11, *Her.* 3 *passim*, AA 2.403, 713, 3.189). Because of this, the variations on it here are intriguing. Everyone knew that Agamemnon swore he had left the girl *virgo intacta*; Ovid, however, cheerfully assumes, judging by his own credo concerning lovers' oaths (see AA 1.631ff., with my note, p. 358), that on this occasion Agamemnon perjured himself (779–84), and would, indeed, have been something less than a man (780) had he failed to seduce Briseis once he had her at his disposal.

Besides offering a nice instance of that trivialization of mythic dignity which we have already more than once noted, not to mention securing a rare personal assertion from the narrator that this is how *he* would have behaved in similar circumstances (781), the passage shows us just how far Ovid would go to work in a sexual double entendre. In Homer Agamemnon does *not* swear by his 'truncheon' or sceptre (783–4), but by Zeus, Earth, the Sun and the Furies (Il. 19–260ff.). The person who *does* so swear is Achilles, in Bk 1 (233–44),

when withdrawing his services from the Achaean army.

785–94 The desire for an enjoyable double entendre likewise explains the reintroduction of the rival at this point. The whole passage, in fact, is riddled with similar sexual teasing. The mistress's 'threshold' (786) refers to more than her house-door, while the 'grotto' (*antro*, 789) where her ex-lover is invited to picture the temptations besetting Odysseus bears, at one level, a close resemblance to Scylla's womb with its chorus of yelping hounds. To make sure we do not miss the point, Ovid's imagery, of spurred horse and well-plied oar, deployed here when instructing his pupils to *hurry past* these danger-areas, is directly borrowed from a context (AA 2.725–6, 731–2) in which it refers to techniques for achieving satisfactory simultaneous orgasm. The irony of reversal here reaches its anticlimactic climax.

795–810 Ancient medical theory placed great emphasis on dietetics (see, e.g., the four books *On Regimen* in the Hippocratic Corpus), and Ovid perhaps felt obliged, when discussing cures for love, to make at least a gesture in this direction (795–6).

The advantages and hazards of intoxicating liquor are frequently mentioned in the amatory poems. With exemplary logic, Ovid therefore recommends, to those shunning renewed erotic entanglement, either total abstinence, or else getting blind drunk (809–10): anything between these two extremes is dangerous. Again, we find conscious verbal echoes (AA 1.237; RA 805) of earlier positive precepts, but there is no hint of a formal climax to the poem. As has often been remarked, there is a logically disjunctive quality to the presentation of ideas from line 642 onwards: themes are stated (750ff.), dropped (766), then resumed (795ff.) after an apparent digression (767–94). How far this is due to deliberate retrospective evocation, and how far to Ovid utilizing surplus material left over from earlier sections, cannot now be determined with any confidence. But one does get the impression (as with Juvenal's huge sixth satire) that Ovid at this point was out of fuel, knew he had, quantitatively speaking, written enough, and therefore simply stopped.

811–14 The envoi or coda to the RA (811–14) is generically akin to those concluding AA 2 (741–4) and AA 3 (809–12): perhaps, *inter alia*, an indication that Ovid originally planned the AA in two books only (cf. my note on AA 2.733ff., p. 381), since AA 1 ends with a two-line link-passage (771–2). Both AA 3 and the RA will then have been added successively, the poet being convinced on each occasion—but only the second time with justification—that this was positively his last word on the subject. As befits a valediction, not only to the present group of poems, but to the whole erotic genre, each phrase carries its full weight. 'My work is concluded' (811) he announces (as he had

already done, prematurely, but with less significance, at AA 2.733 and 3–810). The image of the poem as a voyage of erotic-didactic exploration—for the *praeceptor* as for his audience—reaches its conclusion here with the poet’s vessel safely entering harbour. Grateful readers will make their ex-voto offerings (could this be a polite bid for a *pourboire*?) to ‘the inspired poet’ (813). The fruit of that divine inspiration is the spell, the *carmen* (814), the poetry in which true magic (as opposed to false hocus-pocus) resides. Finally, the word ‘healed’ (*sanati*) recalls the extended metaphor in this poem of Ovid-as-physician, whose gifts are available to men and women alike (814).

ON FACIAL TREATMENT FOR LADIES

1–50 At AA 3.205–8 (see p. 220) we find a clear reference to the prior existence of this little pseudo-didactic poem, which Ovid mined to some purpose when composing the AA. What we have here is certainly not the whole poem. Indeed, the size of the extant sequence—one hundred lines precisely, with a sharp break in sense and style after line 50—strongly suggests two loose non-consecutive double leaves, each with twenty-five lines to the page, from a MS. that once contained substantially more—though just how much more it is now impossible to determine. In several MSS. the fragment is reproduced among the minor poems (*Nux*, *Ibis* or *Somnium* [= *Am.* 3.5]), which seems a fair judgement. Its main interest today lies in its sketching of several themes that recur, more fully developed, as integral elements of the AA, most notably in Bk 3. This applies more particularly to lines 1–50.

For Ovid’s promotion of *cultus*, cultivation—and his deliberate playing on the word’s double meaning when applying it to women—see my note on AA 3.101–32, pp. 385–6. The specific recommendation to care for facial beauty is picked up from 105–6, cf. 100ff., and the metaphorical reinforcement of the image from orchard-farming and tree-grafts (*MF* 5–6) recalls AA 2.6491!. and *RA* 195 ff. The superior sneer at rude female simplicity in the early Republic (*MF* 11–16) is familiar not only from the AA (3.107ff.) but also from the *Amores* (1.8.39ff.). Yet here we become aware of a different attitude. At AA 3.123–8 Ovid emphasizes that his preference for the contemporary world over those simple far-off days does *not* stem from the vast increase in affluence and luxury, but rather from the advent of *cultus*—elegance and sophistication. Here, however (*MF* 17ff.), no such distinction is made: Ovid positively revels in the jewellery, rich dresses and elaborate coiffures (something he was afterwards to condemn in no uncertain terms, AA 3.129ff., 169–72), and justifies

them (23–6) by the curious excuse that nowadays husbands are more elegantly turned out than their wives, a joke with distinctly homosexual overtones (cf. *Am.* 1.8.66–7, *AA* 1.505–8, 3.433ff., with my note, p. 394). He begins, as so often, from a popular truism: girls are narcissists all, whose main aim is to please themselves rather than other people (31ff.), so that both their natural beauty and their artificial adornment are judged, finally, in the mirror. From this follow two obvious corollaries: (a) delight in one's own beauty will thrive only on extravagant compliments, just as the peacock (33–4) refuses to spread its plumage unless praised (for this belief see *AA* 1.627–8, cf. *Am.* 2.6.55–6), and (b) such natural methods of attracting courtship are far more effective, and desirable, than messing around with spells or aphrodisiacs (35–42). This flat statement by Ovid of disbelief in magic (37ff.), reinforced with a string of negatives (*nec ... nec ... nec ... nunquam*), is stronger and more uncompromising than any of his other pronouncements on the subject.

51–100 The second surviving fragment of *MF* is devoted to five detailed recipes for facial beauty-treatment, of which the last remains incomplete: (i) 53–66, a face-pack guaranteed to produce a bright complexion—the ingredients are face-cleaners; (ii) 69–76, not a face-pack but a cleansing aid designed for general application to the body, and containing mineral ingredients; (iii) 77–82, one ingredient, *alcyaneum*, plus honey as a binder, designed to remove spots or freckles; (iv) another face-pack, but of different type, designed to cleanse the complexion and remove blemishes or wrinkles; (v) 99–100, the final, incomplete formula, which is equally therapeutic, poppy being used as a cure for skin eruptions.

It is impossible to conclude an investigation of these recipes without feeling considerable admiration for Ovid's practical knowledge and discrimination.* His judgement in such matters is anything but that of a mere *littérateur*. This is all the more striking when we reflect on the temptations involved. Just how perversely fantastic such formulas could be—and how credulous the literary mind that collected them—we know, all too well, from Pliny. The old polymath devoted one section of his *Natural History* (*HN* 30.28–30) to facial remedies and

skin-cures. Among other substances he recommends for this purpose we find mouse-droppings, macerated ants, vulture's blood, and locusts' legs beaten up with goat-suet. Elsewhere (*HN* 28.185–6) he similarly recommends bull's dung, and a formula involving ass's urine taken at the rising of the Dog Star. He also states, as though it were the result of personal experiment, 'I find that a heavy cold clears up if the sufferer kisses a mule's muzzle' (*HN* 30.31). But Ovid will have no

truck with this kind of hocus-pocus, and the implications are both intriguing and significant. It is not Ovid, but Pliny, who is revealed as the literary scholar incapable of looking beyond, or indeed evaluating, his source-material. Ovid, on the other hand, delivers the goods. At the beginning of the *Art of Love* (1.29) he was to write: *Usus opus movet hoc: vati parete perito* ('This work is based on experience: what I write, believe me, I have practised'). The *MF* formulas reinforce this claim in a solidly practical way, and should make us very cautious indeed about underestimating Ovid's respect, in literature, especially didactic literature (whether parodied or not), for the basic facts of life. The *praeceptor amoris* turns out to be well acquainted with the technicalities of the beauty-parlour; and this familiarity dates back to the period of the *Amores*. Ovid's anguish over Corinna's maltreatment of her hair (*Am.* 1.14, *passim*) clearly stems from a very modern knowledge of the damage that could be done by a harsh lye bleach. Our attitude to his didactic pose must be adjusted in the light of this expert knowledge. Why should a mere literary *jeu d'esprit* practise such nice cosmetic discrimination? And—a corollary that should give us much food for thought—if the *MF* was intended as serious practical advice, is it not possible that we have, similarly, underestimated the practical purpose of the *Art of Love*? The two causes of Ovid's exile, *carmen et error*, the poem and the blunder (*Tr.* 2.207) may, after all, be more closely linked than it is nowadays fashionable to assume.

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Virgil (P. Verg. Maro): 18, 32, 33, 75, 267, 288, 325, 351, 362, 366, 375, 390, 393, 407, 411; *Eclogues*: 32, 110, 330, 372; *Georgia*: 32, 33, 110, 269, 288, 303, 338, 350, 354, 402–3; *Aeneid*: no, 180, 224, 250, 268, 273, 308, 333, 353, 363, 364, 366, 412

Vulcan (Hephaestus): 133, 208–9, 213, 280, 285, 299, 307, 377, 381

Ward, S.: 51

Watts, A. E.: [78](#)

Wheeler, A. L.: [41n](#).

Whitman, W.: [63](#), [270](#)

Wilde, Oscar: [66](#), [412](#)

Wilkinson, L. P.: [11](#), [78](#)

Williams, G.: [70](#)

Writing-tablets: [104–6](#), [116](#), [130](#), [178–80](#), [203](#), [228–9](#), [233](#), [282–3](#),
[317](#), [374](#)

Xanthus, R.: [147](#), [319](#)

Xuthus: [319](#)

Zephyrs: [236](#)

Zetes: [275](#)

Zethus: [319](#), [333](#)

Zeus: see Jupiter

Zoilus (Homeromastix): [412](#)

* At the same time it remains a nice irony that Ovid, the only Augustan poet to suffer official sanctions on moral grounds, was also the only one who ever married—let alone three times. Virgil seems to have been homosexual, Horace liked Greek flute-girls and mirror-lined bedrooms, Tibullus and Propertius suffered, with articulate masochism, under demanding or indifferent mistresses: Ovid may not have been the ideal husband, but at least he tried.

* I owe this suggestion to my student Mr Joseph A. Casazza, who has elaborated his *aperçu* – on the whole along rather different lines–in a University of Texas MA thesis, ‘Corinna and the tradition of love elegy’ (1979).

* Casazza (Ch. iv, pp. 41–56) provides a useful survey of the main passages in the *Amores* where Ovid seems to be treating his relationship with Corinna in marital terms: e.g. 1.8.19, 1.14.39, 2.5 *passim*, 2.11.7–8.

* See Balsdon (1), pp. 117–18, with references, for an excellent brief account of this–in every sense–peculiar phenomenon.

* Jerome reports him as complaining that the power he exercised was *incivilis*, i.e. unjustifiably autocratic; Tacitus (*Ann.* 6.11.4) remarks, tartly, that he found he couldn't cope with the job. The two versions are not necessarily incompatible.

* Ovid also sent hopeful missives (on approval, as it were, like Pindar's 'Phoenician goods') to Germanicus Caesar, Tiberius' nephew, the dedicatee (after Augustus' death) of the *Fasti* (*EP* 2.1), and to the Thracian Cotys, a barbarian prince with a taste for literature (*EP* 2.9); but these were not patrons, much less friends, merely great men to be courted for their potential favours.

* After his *relegatio* Ovid's production-rate drops back sharply again, as we might expect, though not to its original level. If to the 6,726 lines of the exilic poems we add the 644-line *Ibis*, we get a total of 7,370: spread over nine years this produces an 819-line average *per annum*. But there were few social distractions in Tomis. Ovid also tells us that he destroyed much of what he wrote in exile (*Tr.* 4.1.101ff., 5.12.61–2).

* Perilla's identification as Ovid's stepdaughter was established, with cogent arguments; by Wheeler, 'Topics from the life of Ovid', *AJPh* 46 (1925) 26, and is now generally accepted. Other points may be noted. During the earlier years of his exile, Ovid carefully refrained, in the *Poems of Lamentation (Tristia)*, from identifying the addressees of his verse-letters, in order not to expose them to possible reprisals as sympathizers with so notorious a political unperson. There are two exceptions only to this rule: Ovid's wife, and Perilla. The familial inference is clear. The epistle to Perilla also refers (*Tr.* 3.7.45) to Ovid's loss of 'country, home, *and you* [plural]', which clinches the matter: cf. *Tr.* 1.3.64.

* I am only too well aware that this thesis depends on what French scholars so graphically term *une combinaison fragile*, and I advance it here with some diffidence on that account; but it does at least make sense of the scanty evidence at our disposal, and for that reason I feel inclined to let it stand.

* His repeated claim (*EP* 3.4.59–60, 4.11.15–16) that an exchange of correspondence between Rome and Tomis could take up to a year is clearly based on his own leisurely progress, and calculated to emphasize the Black Sea's remoteness. Elsewhere, however (*EP* 4.5.5–8), he is considerably more realistic about the speed of the mail service.

* Ovid suggests at one point (*Tr.* 2.237–8) that Augustus has never read the poem, only (like too many modern magistrates) heard carefully culled passages read by ill-wishers (*Tr.* 2.77–80), a practice, as he rightly points out, liable to inhibit fair judgement.

* If Ovid derived a good deal of his early erotic material from his first wife (see p. 23), this would not only provide an excellent motive for keeping the identity of 'Corinna' a secret (since tradition demanded an elusive mistress rather than a legally available wife: imagine the literary snickers if the truth got out!), but would, for this period at least, also give an unexpected and ironic truth to his claim, from exile, that his Muse may have been wanton, but his life was chaste. Equally ironic, of course, was the poet who, in such circumstances, wrote poems about the adultery game, only to have his wife take off to practise what he preached.

* 'Frame' poems include 1.1, 1.15, 2.1, 2.18 (? to be placed after 2.19), 3.1 and 3.15, all on the pursuit of elegy; the only indisputable 'pivot' poem is 1.8, the bawd's sermon on the advantages of gold-digging.

* Editors have often remarked that lines 669–74 are out of place here, but no truly satisfactory place was found for them until it was shown that they properly belong at the *end* of Book 2, between lines 732 and 733. I have therefore transposed them in the present version.

* Lines 395–6 do not appear in two of the better MSS, and are omitted as spurious by some editors. I am in two minds about this verdict, so translate them here:

Then guilty complicity will keep her from betraying you,
And you will learn of all your mistress says or does.

* Lines 583–8 are a spurious (and moralizing) insertion by some post-Ovidian hand:

It's a safe, well-trodden path to deceive in friendship's
name: safe

And well-trodden perhaps, but still

The path of guilt. That way a collector collects more

Than is due him, looks to care for more than his charge.

* For a more detailed investigation of the Cephalus-Procris myth and its literary evolution, see now my article ‘The innocence of Procris: Ovid *AA* 3.687–746’, *CJ* 75 (1979–80) 15–24.

* See Green (3) *passim*. Pliny's own claim (*HN* 30.33) that Ovid was his source for a prescription against quinsy that included goose-gall, owls' brains and ashes of burnt swallow is intrinsically implausible: where, would Ovid have written up such a thing? It does not figure anywhere in the surviving works (which account for by far the greater part of Ovid's output), and, since it has nothing to do with the complexion, clearly would be out of place in the *MF*. Nor is it easy to imagine it finding a place in any of the known lost works, such as the poem on Tiberius' victories in Pannonia (*EP* 3.4, cf. 2.3.7) or any of the other commemorative minor verses listed by Owen at the end of his OCT text of the *Tristia* and *Epislulae ex Pono*. The *Medea*, perhaps, as part of the eponymous heroine's *pharmacopoeia magica*) Hardly, when we recall that this was a tragedy, which won high praise from both Quintilian (*Inst. Oral.* 10.1.98) and Tacitus (*Dial.* 12).